THE DISCARDED DAUGHTER

MRS E.D.E.N. SOUTHWORTH

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E. J. Curtis

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THE DISCARDED DAUGHTER

OR

The Children of the Isle

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of "Ishmael," "The Hidden Hand," "The Bride's Fate," "The Changed Brides," etc.

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INTRODUCTORY.

ST. CLARA'S ISLE.

The Island lies nine leagues away.
Along its solitary shore
Of craggy rock and sandy bay,
No sound but ocean's roar,
Save where the bold, wild sea-bird makes her home,
Her shrill cry coming through the sparkling foam.
—*R. H. Dana.*

THE scenes of our story lie along the Western shore of Maryland, near the mouth of the Potomac River, and among the islets of the Chesapeake Bay.

Nothing can be more beautiful, grand, and inspiring than the scenery of this region.

The great Potomac, a mighty and invincible monarch of rivers, even from her first stormy conquest, in which she rent apart the everlasting mountains, and forced herself a passage to the sea—widens and broadens her channel, extending the area of her empire continually as she goes on her irresistible way in a vast, calm, majestic flow of waters to the ocean.

At the mouth of the river on the north, or Maryland side, is Point Lookout; on the south, or Virginia side, is Smith's Point, with an expanse of water twenty miles in width between them.

The shore on the Maryland side is broken by the most beautiful creeks and inlets, and dotted by the most beautiful islets that imagination can depict—creeks whose crystal-clear waters reflect every undulating hill and vale, every shadowy tree and bright flower lying upon their banks, and every soft and dark, or sun-gilded and glorious cloud floating in the skies above their bosoms; islets whose dewy, fresh and green luxuriance of vegetation, darksome trees and profound solitude, tempt one

into poetic dreams of an ideal hermitage. The beauty and interest of this shore is enhanced by the occasional glimpses of rural homes—magnificent, or simply picturesque—seen indistinctly through the trees, at the head of some creek, on the summit of some distant hill, or in the shades of some thick grove.

Nothing can surpass the pleasure of the opposite but delightfully blended emotions inspired by this scene.

On the one hand the near shore, with its inlets and islands, its sunny hills and shadowy dells, its old forests, its cornfields, and its sweet, sequestered homes, yields that dear sense of safety and repose which the most adventurous never like to lose entirely.

On the other hand, looking out to the sea, the broad expanse of waters, the free and unobstructed pathway to all parts of the world, fills and dilates the heart with an exultant sense of boundless freedom!

I said that the islets of the Potomac were fertile, verdant, and luxurious in vegetation. This is because their sandy soil is mixed freely with clay and marl; because it is enriched with the deposits of the vast flocks of water-fowl that hover upon them for safe repose; and finally, because, unlike the worn-out lands of the peninsula, the soil is a virgin one, where for ages vegetation has budded, bloomed, and decayed, and returned to the earth to fertilize it. (And here let me be pardoned for saying that it is a matter of surprise to me that the attention of enterprising men has never been turned to these islands as a source of agricultural wealth; for, besides the rich fertility of the soil, the salubrity of the air, and the beauty and grandeur of the land and water scenery, these islands are rich in shoals of fish, crabs, and oysters, and in vast flocks of water-fowl. But we ever overlook and leave the near to seek the far-off goal.)

Beyond the mouth of the river, however, and up the coast of the bay, the islands are sandy and poor—nearly unproductive, or entirely barren.

Anyone who will turn to the map of Maryland will see that the Chesapeake Bay is interspersed with numerous islands of all sizes, from the largest—Kent Island—

to the smallest, nameless sand bank; that the eastern and western shores of Maryland are beautifully diversified with every modification of land and water scenery; that the inlets and islands of the coast form the most charming features of the landscape.

. . . . . .

Some distance above Point Lookout, at the mouth of the Potomac River, up the western shore of Maryland, there is a beautiful inlet, or small bay, making up about three miles into the land, called St. Clara's Bay by one of the early Roman Catholic settlers. At the headwaters of this inlet is a small, very old hamlet, the site of one of the first settlements of the State, intended once, no doubt, for a great colonial seaport, and christened by the same sponsor St. Clarasville. With its fine harbor and great commercial facilities, whatever could have arrested its growth and withered it in its prime I do not know—possibly the very abundance of other good harbors on the coast—probably the frequent and violent dissensions between the pre-emption freebooters of the Bay Isles and the legal proprietors and settlers of the mainland. Lying two miles off the mouth of this inlet, and stretching across in front of it, is an oblong, sandy, and nearly barren island—rich, however, in fish, crabs, oysters, and water-fowl, and upon this account a great resort in early colonial times, and baptized by the same devout claimant of the bay and town St. Clara's Isle, in honor of his patron saint.

But there was another claimant of the island, inlet, and township; a freebooter, who, believing in and acknowledging no greater personage than himself, had named the isle, the bay, and town also, when it was laid out, after himself. So they were first and most frequently called Hutton's Island, Bay, and Town.

THE DISCARDED DAUGHTER

CHAPTER I.

MOUNT CALM.

A proud, aristocratic hall it seems,
Not courting, but discouraging approach.
—*Moultrie.*

LET me introduce you to Mount Calm, the seat of General Aaron Garnet. Even from the bay you can see the mansion house, with its broad white front, as it crowns the highest of a distant range of hills. After passing through the village of Hutton, and going up and down the grassy hills that rise one above the other beyond it, you enter a deep hollow, thickly grown with woods, and passing through it, begin to ascend by a heavily shaded forest road the last and highest hill of the range—Mount Calm. When about halfway up this hill you come to the brick walls inclosing the private grounds, and passing through the porter's gate you enter a heavily-shaded carriage drive, that, sweeping around in an ascending half-circle, brings you up before the mansion house.

Behind the house was a green slope and a thick grove that concealed from view the extensive outbuildings connected with the establishment. Extensive fields of corn, wheat, rye, oats, tobacco, etc., spread all over the undulatory land. The estate itself comprised several thousands of the best acres in old St. Mary's County, and there were several hundred of them under the best cultivation and in the richest state of productiveness.

This princely estate had remained in the possession of the Chesters since the first settlement of the county, and

unlike the usual fate of old Maryland plantations, the property had not only been carefully preserved, but had steadily increased in value up to the time of the Revolution, when it had reached its highest importance.

The estate was then in the hands of Charles Chester, Esq., Justice of the Peace and Associate Judge of the Provincial Court. His family consisted of a wife, two sons, and a daughter.

At the breaking out of the Revolution Judge Chester and his two stalwart boys took the field among the first, and at the triumphant close of the war Colonel Chester set out on his return home with a pair of epaulettes, minus his pair of goodly sons, who were left not only dead upon the field of glory, but buried with all the honors of victorious war upon the immortal plains of Yorktown. And thus it happened that the heirship of the heavy estate, with all its burden of onerous responsibilities, fell upon the frail shoulders of young Alice Chester —a fair-skinned, golden-haired, blue-eyed girl of seventeen, the fairest, gentlest, and most fragile being that ever owed life to a stern and warlike sire. Alice, living at home with her simple-hearted, domestic mother, had been very little noticed by her father, or even by anyone else, until, by the death of his sons, she became the sole heiress of the vast estate, which was to prove the greatest misfortune of her life.

The long, long bleak winters were passed in almost inviolable seclusion, cheered only by an occasional letter from the army, and an occasional ride to church, if the road happened to be passable, which was seldom the case.

This life lasted until Alice was fifteen years of age, when an event occurred such as would make no stir at all in a city, but which will throw a quiet country neighborhood into convulsions, namely, a change of ministry—not national, but parochial! The old parson, compelled by declining health, had departed to take charge of a congregation farther south, and a young parson had come in his stead. The Rev. Milton Sinclair was handsome, graceful, and accomplished.

By the invitation of Mrs. Chester the young minister

became the temporary inmate of Mount Calm, and very much he entertained and instructed, cheered and sustained the secluded mother and daughter. He became the almoner of the lady to the poor around. He directed and superintended the reading of Alice; introducing gradually, as her opening mind could bear, all the beauties and glories of science, history, philosophy, and poetry.

As the days fled, Alice and Milton Sinclair grew to love each other, and one day the minister told his great love and was made happy by Alice confessing that she returned his affection. Mrs. Chester, too, approved of the match, and she set her maids to work carding, spinning, knitting, weaving, and sewing, that Alice might have a full supply of every description of household cloth and linen. The bride's trousseau was the last thing thought of, and there was time enough, she thought, for that when her father should arrive. She did not know when that would be, but it was well to have everything that took a great deal of time and labor, such as the house and furniture and the household stuff, ready —as for the wedding dresses and other minor preparations, of course they must be deferred until Colonel Chester's arrival, and then they could be speedily got up.

It was in the midst of this domestic happiness, this great tense joy and hope, that the thunderbolt fell!

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW SUITOR.

How! Will she none? Doth she not give us thanks?
Is she not proud? Doth she not count her blessed,
Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
So worthy a gentleman to be her bridegroom?

—Shakspere.

FIRST came the news of the glorious victory of Yorktown—the final and signal triumph of the American arms. There were no railroads and telegraphic wires in

those days, and very few newspapers. The report, the re-echo of this splendid victory, rolled on toward their quiet neighborhood like a storm; in clouds of doubt, in thunder and lightning of astonishment, joy, and mad triumph. The most delirious rejoicing convulsed the whole village and neighborhood for days, before any newspaper arrived with an account of the battle.

And the same mail that brought the newspaper, with a long account of the battle, headed in great capital letters line below line, brought also a letter sealed with black that sped like a bullet through the foreboding heart of Mrs. Chester, a letter from Colonel Chester, announcing the glorious death of his two brave sons upon the field of victory.

Mrs. Chester was overwhelmed with grief by the twofold bereavement, the fall of both her gallant sons, of whom she was as proud as fond.

She did not dream of the calamity, worse than death, that had befallen Alice, in the disguise of a princely inheritance, destined to darken her whole life with sorrow, while it mocked her in the face of the world with its unreal light and splendor.

But there was one who was not so forgetful—Colonel Chester. He was still with the army, but another letter was received from him, announcing his speedy return home, accompanied by his friend and companion in arms, General Garnet, a young officer, who, though but thirty years of age, had risen to the highest rank in the army, and won an immortal fame.

Colonel Chester came at length, accompanied by General Garnet. He met Alice with great empressement—for it was scarcely great affection—praised her growth and her beauty, introduced General Garnet, and, excusing himself for a few moments, passed to the sick-chamber of his wife.

Left alone with her guest Alice examined him shyly, with the curiosity of a woman and the bashfulness of a country girl. General Garnet was what young ladies call a fine, military-looking man. He certainly had a fine, martial figure and bearing, or that which is our ideal of

it—a tall and elegantly proportioned figure, a calm, majestic carriage, yet withal suggestive of great reposing strength and fire. His voice was perfect harmony itself. His manner was dignified and imposing, or graceful, earnest, and seductive. Yet, sometimes, one in a sudden, vague astonishment, would feel that he was a man who could unite the utmost inflexibility, and even cruelty of purpose, with the most graceful and gracious urbanity of manner. With all his marvelous powers of fascination he was a man to darken, chill, repel a bright-spirited, warm-souled, pure-hearted girl like Alice. Yet she did the honors of her father's house to her father's guest until that guest merged into the lover, and then Alice felt and betrayed the utmost soul-sickened repugnance to him and his suit.

It was now that the object of Colonel Chester in inviting this distinguished visitor to Mount Calm became evident—that of bestowing the hand of his daughter and heiress upon him.

After a conversation with General Garnet he sent for Alice, and, without any preface at all, bade her make up her mind to a speedy marriage with the husband he had chosen for her, his distinguished and dear friend, General Garnet.

Alice passed from the room, mechanically pressing her hands to her temples, trying to awake as from a heart-sickening dream. And so she passed to her now frequent post of duty, her declining mother's darkened room and sick-bed. The senses, or the intuitions, or the instincts of those on the confines of the unseen world are sometimes preternaturally acute. There was that in the falling footstep, in the very form and bearing, of Alice, as she glided through the shadows of that dark room, that revealed to the mother the existence of some heavy cloud teeming with sorrow, that was ready to burst upon the devoted head of her child.

She called Alice to her bedside, took her hand in her gentle grasp, looked with wondering sadness into her eyes—her eyes set in the stare of blank stupor—and murmured tenderly:

"What is the matter, Alice? Tell your mother?"

Her mother's loving voice and touch unsealed the spellbound founts of tears and speech.

"Oh, mother! mother! I am ruined! ruined!" she wildly gasped, and, sinking down upon the floor, dropped her head upon the bed with hysterical sobs and gasps, and inarticulate wailings.

Her mother laid her gentle hand upon her child's burning and throbbing head, and raised her tender eyes in silent prayer for her, while this storm raged, and until it passed, and Alice, exhausted, but calm, was able to rise, sit by her side, and while she held her hand, tell her what had happened.

"I will speak to him, Alice," she then said. "I will tell him how you and Sinclair love each other—as you could not tell him, my child. I will show him how vain —oh, how vain! are wealth, and rank, and honor, and glory, in the hour of grief, by the bed of death, in the presence of God! how love, and truth, and faith are all in all! Yes! and I will make him feel it, too. And, though he should not realize it as I do, yet he will never refuse me a request now!"

And the next morning, directly after breakfast, Colonel Chester received a message from his wife, requesting him to come to her room for a few minutes, if convenient, as she wished to speak with him.

Colonel Chester went. What passed at that interview no one knew more than what might be guessed from what followed.

Colonel Chester came out of the room, banging the door after him, with a half-uttered imprecation upon "sickly fancies," "irritable nerves," and "foolish women." But immediately after this interview Mrs. Chester became much worse; her fever rose to delirium, and she was alarmingly ill for several days. Milton Sinclair heard of her state, and, little suspecting the cause, came to see her. He was met by Colonel Chester, who informed him that his wife was too ill to receive even her pastor, and requested him to walk into the library. There Colonel Chester informed him that circumstances

had occurred which made it his painful duty to beg that Mr. Sinclair would temporarily suspend his visits to Mount Calm.

"Alice!" exclaimed the young man. That name contained everything, and rendered a full explanation indispensable. It was given.

Deadly pale, Sinclair walked up and down the floor, pressing his head tightly between his two palms and groaning—groaning the name, the prayer, that in the bitterest agony of the soul starts to every lip:

"My God! oh, my God! have pity on me! God have mercy on me!"

The heart-broken tone of these words touched even that hard man of the world, Colonel Chester.

"Come, come, Sinclair; you must have been prepared for this for some months past. I did not violently and at once separate you from Alice when I first came home, although you must have known that all our plans were changed. I gave you time to wean yourself gradually off. In other circumstances, indeed, I should have felt myself most honored, most happy in the alliance; but we do not control our own destinies. Good-day, Sinclair. You will forget Alice."

CHAPTER III.

THE FATHER'S TYRANNY.

An thou be mine, I'll give thee to my friend!
An thou be not, hang, beg, starve, die i' the streets,
Nor what is mine shall ever do thee good,
Trust to it, bethink you! I'll not be forsworn!
—*Shakspere.*

SINCLAIR! Sinclair! Where in the world was he? Where had he been so many days? Why did he not come? Alice could have given the world to have seen him.

She did not know that he had been forbidden the

house. She was totally ignorant of everything that had passed between her father and himself. She walked wildly about the house and grounds, instinctively avoiding her feeble mother's room, lest in her present distracted state she should kill her with agitation; afraid of meeting her father, and doubly afraid of encountering General Garnet, and wishing and praying—oh! praying, as if for dear life, that she might meet Sinclair.

One afternoon she wrote a wild letter to him, illegible and unintelligible every way except in this—that he must "come to Mount Calm immediately." She sent the letter off, and walked up and down her chamber, trying to get calm enough to go and see her mother. While thus employed a message reached her from her mother, desiring her to come to her room. Alice went immediately. As she entered the dark chamber Mrs. Chester called her up to the side of her bed; she saw that her mother's countenance had changed fearfully since the morning, and now a new terror and remorse seized her heart; she was about to speak, when Mrs. Chester said:

"Alice, you look frightfully pale and haggard, my dear child. Alice, we were foiled this morning. Your father has been here, and told me all about it—the projected marriage in a week, and all; but do not fear, my dear child, you shall not be sacrificed; it is not right. I have sent a message to Mr. Sinclair to come here this evening. He has not been here for some time, and when he comes I must have a talk with him."

At this moment a servant entered the chamber, to whom Mrs. Chester turned, saying:

"Milly, mix a teaspoonful of ether with a little water, and hand it to Miss Alice. She is not well. You must take it, Alice, dear; you are really very ill, and it will compose your nerves."

"Mr. Sinclair is downstairs, madam, and wants to know if he may come up," said the girl, as she handed the glass to Alice.

Alice dropped the glass, untasted.

"Where is General Garnet?" said Mrs. Chester.

"In the library, writing, madam."

"Where is Colonel Chester?"

"Gone out riding, madam."

"Thank Heaven! Yes, request Mr. Sinclair to come up, Milly."

After the departure of the girl the mother and daughter remained in silent expectation. At last the light, quick footstep of Sinclair was heard upon the stairs.

"Go and meet him, Alice, my darling," said the mother, with a smile.

Alice arose, and as he opened the door and advanced into the room, started forward and threw herself weeping into his arms. What could he do but press her to his bosom? Then he led her back to her mother's bedside—stooped over the sick lady, taking her hand, and inquiring tenderly, respectfully, after her health of body and soul. While she was making her gentle, patient reply, the attention of all three was arrested by the noise of heavy, hurried footsteps hastening up the stairs.

"It is your father, Alice! Oh, God, save us!" exclaimed Mrs. Chester, just as Colonel Chester, with one violent kick of his boot, burst open the door, and, purple and convulsed with rage, stood among them.

"Who admitted this man? Who sent for him?" he demanded, in a furious voice.

"I did. I sent for him," said the mother, pale with fear and feebleness, but wishing to shield her daughter.

"I did! I wrote him a note," murmured the daughter, in a dying voice, sick with terror, but wishing to save her mother.

"Traitors! Shameless household traitors! so there are a pair of you! a desirable wife and daughter! a very suitable mother and daughter! But I'll find a way to punish you both. I'll——"

Here he was interrupted by Sinclair, who, turning to him, said, in a composed but stern voice:

"Colonel Chester, visit your anger and reproaches upon me, who knew of your prohibition, not upon those who possibly knew nothing about it."

"You have the insolence to tell me, sir, to remind me, that you knew of my prohibition to cross my threshold!

while standing here in my house, in the very heart of my house, my wife's bedchamber!" exclaimed Colonel Chester furiously.

"In your wife's sick-chamber, sir, where, as a Christian minister, it is my bounden duty sometimes to come."

"And, d—— you, from whence I'll put you out!" exclaimed the infuriated man.

"I will go. Good-evening, Mrs. Chester; good-evening, Alice. I leave you in the care of Heaven," said Sinclair, wishing, by all means, to avoid the disgrace of a struggle.

"Go! what, go quietly like an honored guest dismissed? No, d—— you, you came surreptitiously, and you shall depart involuntarily. No, d—— you, I will put you out!" vociferated the maniac, in an ungovernable fury, springing upon Sinclair.

A violent struggle ensued. Sinclair acted entirely upon the defensive, saying, continually, as he could make himself heard:

"Colonel Chester, let me go! I will leave quietly; I would have done so at first."

And now the deathly grip and struggle went on in silence, interrupted only by the short, curt, hissing exclamations of the enraged man through his now whitened lip and clenched teeth. Sinclair was half the age and double the weight and strength of his opponent, and could easily have mastered him, but did not want the odium of doing it.

While wrestling desperately on the defensive, he expostulated once more:

"Colonel Chester—not for my sake, but for your own—for your family's, for honor's sake, let me depart in peace!"

"Ah, villain!" exclaimed the madman, finding his strength failing, and suddenly drawing a pistol, he pointed it at Sinclair's temple and fired. Sinclair suddenly started, and the bullet went through the window, shattering the glass. Chester now raised the spent pistol and aimed with it a violent blow upon Sinclair's head. Sinclair quickly caught his descending hand, when——

A power more awful than the judge's baton, the monarch's scepter, or the priest's elevated crucifix arrested the combat.

Death stood in their presence! A cry of mortal anguish from Alice caused both to turn and look—both to drop their hold—and stand like conscience-stricken culprits!

There lay Mrs. Chester, the gentle, patient, long-suffering woman, stricken down, dying in her daughter's arms.

Colonel Chester came to his senses at once, feeling all the horror and remorse of a murderer.

And Sinclair repented from his soul that he had not permitted himself to be expelled from the house with every species of ignominy rather than to have seen this.

That ashen brow—those fixed eyes—that silent tongue, and quick, gasping breath! that face of the dying! it would never depart from his memory. Oh! any personal indignity rather than this memory! if he could but save her! but she was beyond all help now, for—even as full of sorrow and remorse he gazed—with a long, deep sigh, as for the pilgrims she left behind on earth, her spirit passed to God.

Sinclair bore Alice, fainting, from the room.

Colonel Chester fell down on his knees, dropping his head upon the bed, and throwing his arms over his dead wife in a paroxysm of remorse and despair, ungovernable as his rage had been, and, alas! nearly as transient!

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUBJECTION OF ALICE.

Oh! bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
From off the battlements of yonder tower.
—*Shakspere*

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh!
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy!
—*Ibid.*

After this terrible family storm, in which poor Mrs. Chester's vital powers had suddenly failed, the peace stern death enforces reigned through the house. Alice, her heart and brain overturned by endurance, lay exhausted, almost insensible, upon her bed within her chamber.

General Garnet had taken himself off to the village tavern, whence he had been invited to pass a week or two, at Point Yocomoco, the seat of Judge Wylie.

Mr. Sinclair, in the disinterested kindness of his heart, remained at the house, superintending and directing everything, unquestioned by Colonel Chester, who, when he met, recognized him with a sigh or a groan. He remained until the funeral was over, and the house restored to its former order, and departed without seeing Alice, who, still prostrated, had not left her room. And after this, as Colonel Chester had not revoked his prohibition, he came to the house no more.

As days glided into weeks Alice recovered a portion of her strength, left the chamber, and mournfully went about her customary occupations.

Poor Alice! her spirit was very willing, but her nerves were very weak. So it was with a pang of fear that Alice heard her father at the breakfast-table one morning announce the expected arrival of General Garnet that evening. Yes, Colonel Chester, thinking that now perhaps sufficient time had elapsed since her mother's death—and sufficient strength and cheerfulness had re-

turned to his daughter—had recalled her suitor. Alice was trembling violently—she dared not look up. She had been taught to love and venerate her father above all earthly beings, and next to God. She loved and venerated him still, and kept her thoughts reverently away from investigating his motive and judging his conduct. She had been taught to bow with implicit and reverential obedience to his will. To oppose him had not been easy in her thought—it was terrible in practice. It would have been terrible to her had her father been a man of moderate temper and self-control; but he was a man of violent and ungovernable passion; and Alice was in an agony of terror when she faltered out:

"Father, if General Garnet comes here only as your guest, I will welcome him with every possible attention; I will try to make him feel at home, and endeavor to render his sojourn with us in every other way agreeable; but if he comes here as my suitor——" Here her voice died away.

"Well!"

It is impossible to convey the short, curt, galvanic strength and abruptness with which he jerked, as it were, this syllable out, and brought Alice up. It was like throwing the lasso suddenly around her neck, and jerking her up face to face with him. And such a face! It is impossible to paint the grim determination of the locked jaws, armed with the wiry stubble beard, bristled up with fierceness, and the ferocity of the darkly-gathered frown that screwed his glance upon her pallid face, that screwed it into her very brain. Alice turned deadly sick, her eyes filmed over, and she sank back in her chair. She did not faint or lose consciousness, for the next instant she felt her father's iron hand upon her fragile shoulder, and her father's awful voice in that low, deep, suppressed tone of fierce, immutable determination, saying:

"Miss Chester, it is not as your suitor, but as your husband, that General Garnet will come this evening. I command you to receive him as such."

And he left her.

CHAPTER V.

THE HUSBAND'S AUTHORITY.

Yet haply there will come a weary day,
When overtasked at length,
Both Love and Hope beneath the weight give way;
Then with a statue's smile, a statue's strength,
Stands the mute sister, Patience, nothing loth,
And both supporting does the work of both.
—*Coleridge.*

LET us hasten over the next few hideous weeks. Alice had a serious illness, from which she recovered slowly; her spirit utterly broken; her heart utterly crushed; her very brain clouded. Her whole being bowed down by the storm of sorrow, yet with no one to support, comfort, sympathize with her. Sinclair, that only living being who could have saved her, was absent, forbidden to approach her. She was left alone, almost imbecile, and so quite defenseless in the terrible power of her father.

And what words are these to write! and what a position was hers when that divinely appointed parental authority—that protective and beneficent power—was perverted by pride, ambition, and selfishness into an engine of mighty torture, inflicting a fatal and life long calamity!

Yet the father verily believed that he was disinterestedly serving his daughter's best interests. There is no more profoundly mournful illustration of the ruined archangel than that of any perverted love.

With the support of her feeble mother, had she lived —with the support of Sinclair, had his piety been less æscetic, more hopeful—Alice might have successfully resisted the fate impending over her; but she was alone, reduced by sorrow and illness to a state of imbecility of mind and body, and she succumbed to her destiny.

So, in just three months from the death of her mother Alice Chester, pallid, cold, nearly lifeless, whiter than the pearls in her pale hair, stood in bridal array before God's holy altar, to vow in the hearing of men and angels to

love and honor one whom she found it difficult not to hate and despise.

Immediately after the marriage they set out upon a bridal tour through the North. They were absent all summer. Early in autumn they returned to Mount Calm, where, at the earnest desire of Colonel Chester, they took up their residence. Alice would have preferred it otherwise.

After their marriage, and during their long and varied bridal tour, she had, as it were, lost her identity, seeming to herself to be someone else. The varied scenes of her journey—the stage-offices, turnpike roads, country taverns, great cities with their masses of brick and mortar, public edifices, forests of shipping, gay shops, theaters, concerts, balls, illuminations, dancings, splendid attire, stage pageantry, the ranting and the after silence, land journeys, water journeys—all haunted by one painful presence—had passed before her like a phantasmagoria; like a continuation of her brain fever, with its nervous delirium and grotesque or hideous visions and hallucinations. So all had seemed to her, while she seemed to all a pale, pretty, silent girl.

There is a point of suffering beyond which sorrow destroys itself—is not felt as real—just as there is a crisis at which physical agony superinduces insensibility. So it had been with Alice, until she re-entered her native State, and memory and association were at work again,

"And the accustomed train
Of things grew round her brain again";

then it was with the shrinking dread with which a burned child would approach fire that Alice drew near her home. She would have preferred to remain away for ever, amid the kaleidoscopic changes of her new, wandering, unreal life, rather than have awakened from the strange, painful, but very vague dream; rather than have consciousness forced upon her by the dear, old familiar scenes and associations of her home—her once peaceful, hopeful, happy home, as by

"Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength."

The day of their arrival at home a large company had been invited to meet them at dinner. The days that followed were filled up with dinner parties. At length, late in the fall, they were quietly settled, and the monotonous routine of daily country life commenced. One thing Alice dreaded and avoided—appearing at church again under her new position and name. But Sinclair had accepted a "call" to a church in the West, which opened to him a new field of labor and usefulness. His departure followed; and this was a great relief to Alice, who, with the "sigh of a great deliverance, tried to leave the past with all its gloom and terror," and turn to the future with some hope.

Two events of great domestic importance occurred in the second year of their marriage; one was the death of Colonel Chester, who died, as all their neighbors said, of nothing more than his diabolical temper; as their physician said, of congestion of the brain, brought on by excitement. And what do you think was the cause of this fatal excitement? That the child of Alice happened to be a girl instead of a boy, which he had set his heart upon.

CHAPTER VI.

COUNTRY NEIGHBORS.

Blest those abodes where want and pain repair
And every stranger finds a ready chair;
Blest be those feasts, with joyous plenty crowned,
Where all the blooming family around,
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale,
Or press the weary traveler to his food,
And feel the luxury of doing good.

—*Goldsmith.*

ALICE was almost in solitary confinement in the cold, stern prison of her home, for General Garnet discouraged association with old friends, who at least suggested the past, if they did not openly refer to it.

But there was one family, and that family the very warmest and most steadfast among the few friends of Sinclair, from whom General Garnet had not the will to separate his young wife—the Wylies of Yocomoco, or Point Pleasant, as their seat was more frequently called by their delighted visitors. Who, indeed, had the will or the power to do aught to annoy the delightful host of Point Pleasant?

Who in all the South has not heard of Judge Jacky Wylie, still called judge because he had once sat upon the bench, though not finding the seat comfortable, he had abandoned it, affirming that he had "not the heart" for the business? That was a favorite phrase of the judge, who was always asserting that he "hadn't the heart," when everyone knew that he had the largest heart in all old Maryland.

And there was his mother, a gentlewoman of the old school, without any state about her, a Lady Bountiful of the neighborhood, without any pretensions.

Who did not know and love old Mrs. Wylie?

How she was adored by the large, miscellaneous family Jack had gathered together! To be sure, all Jacky's unprovided nieces and nephews were her grandchildren, and it was partly for love of her, to please her, to let her gather all her second brood under her wing, that her son Jacky collected them. Yes, she was adored by all that household of laughing girls and roystering boys, the tide of whose love and fondness for her was so great that it sometimes overflowed the barriers of veneration—just as Jacky's confidence in God sometimes swamped his reverence!—but most of all was she idolized by the adopted son of Judge Jacky, Ulysses Roebuck.

Next to his grandmother Ulysses loved his smallest cousin, little Ambrosia, the only child of Judge Jacky, and the little goddess of the whole household of grown-up and growing young men and maidens. Little Ambrosia, named after her Uncle Ambrose, who had been the elder and only brother of Jacky, and the favorite of his mother, but who had died in youth. And it was to please his mother that Jacky, having no son,

called his little daughter after his brother. And it was a lovely name, too, he thought—a lovely, tempting, caressable name! really better than one could have hoped; for Ambrose was old-fashioned and ugly—low be it spoken.

I think the negroes must have conceived it to be a "tempting" name, too; for, with their inevitable fault of corrupting language, they called the little seraph, with her charming face and sunny hair, "Miss Ambush."

And "Marse Useless" and "Miss Ambush" were the prime favorites of the plantation, notwithstanding, or perhaps, because of, the dare-devil, don't care-ishness of the former.

It was with this family, then, that General and Mrs. Garnet interchanged frequent visits. Often the old lady, Mrs. Wylie, accompanied by little Ambrosia and a waiting-maid, would drive up to Mount Calm in their old-fashioned phaeton, to spend the day; or else two or three of the girls and young men would ride up to pass an evening, and return by starlight. And not unfrequently young Mrs. Garnet would go down with her little Alice and pass a day and night at Point Pleasant.

There was yet another family with whom the Garnets were upon terms of close intimacy and friendship—their next neighbors, the Hardcastles of Hemlock Hollow, whose estate joined Mount Calm, lying immediately behind and below it, and extending further inland. The family at the Hollow consisted of Lionel Hardcastle, High Sheriff of the State; his only son, Lionel, Jr., a youth of fifteen, and his nephew, Magnus, a boy of ten years old.

Lionel Hardcastle was the only man in the county with whom General Garnet could be said to be on terms of close intimacy. Their estates, as I said, joined; their rank in life was upon a par, and their country interests almost identical. They were also of the same party in politics, of the same denomination in religion, and of like opinon upon all common and local questions; so that there was very little to differ about, while there was a great deal to attract them to each other in their very

opposite temperaments and characters, experiences, and mental acquisitions.

Mrs. Garnet had always been strongly attached to the family at the Hollow, and though there was no lady at the head of the establishment to receive her, she continued to accept the invitations to dinner extended to General Garnet and herself, and always accompanied him thither.

But Mrs. Garnet had her favorite among the Hardcastles—this was young Magnus Hardcastle, the nephew, a fine, handsome, spirited, and generous boy, devotedly fond of his beautiful neighbor, and her sweet little girl. Very often would Mrs. Garnet take Magnus home with her to spend several days or weeks at Mount Calm. And when he was not staying there, still every day would the boy find his way to Mount Calm, with some little childish love-offering to its sweet mistress. In spring it would be a bunch of wood violets, or wild sweet-briar roses, gathered in the thicket, and of which Alice was very fond; in summer, a little flag-basket of wild strawberries or raspberries, which Alice loved better than hothouse or garden fruit; in autumn, a hat full of chestnuts and chinkapins, gathered in the forest, and hulled by himself; even in winter the little fellow might be seen trudging on, knee-deep in snow, with a bunch of snowbirds which he had caught in his trap for pretty Cousin Alice, as he called Mrs. Garnet.

Very bright would grow Mrs. Garnet's pleasant chamber when Magnus, with his sunny smile, would break in upon the pensive lady and the little child, and light up all the room with his gladness. Very often the lady would open her arms to receive the joyous boy, and fold him to her bosom in a most loving clasp, grateful for the new life and joy he ever brought her.

Mrs. Garnet loved her own beautiful and gentle child, but it was with a profound, earnest, almost mournful and foreboding love.

But Magnus was a perpetual day-spring of gladness and delight to her. She could not look upon the boy without a thrill of sympathetic joy and hope.

And so the years had passed, and Alice grew happy in their flight, until the second trial of her life approached.

CHAPTER VII.

HUTTON OF THE ISLES.

Thou art as tall, as sinewy, and as strong,
As earth's first kings—the Argo's gallant sailors—
Heroes in history, and gods in song.

—*Halleck.*

THE Huttons, proprietors by pre-emption right of St. Clara's town, bay, and isle for more than two hundred years, had settled among the islets of the bay many years previous to the date of that patent by which James I. granted the province of Maryland to George Calvert.

At the commencement of the American Revolution a certain Captain Hugh Hutton, the then representative and head of the family, fired with an enthusiastic passion for liberty, or—fighting! sold a great portion of his patrimony, and purchased, fitted out, and manned a privateer, and sailed against the British flag.

He served gallantly and with various success during the whole period of the war.

At the glorious close of the revolutionary struggle, ruined in fortune and riddled with wounds, Captain Hugh Hutton, the sailor-patriot and martyr, retired to the last foothold of his once kingly estate, to the little island of St. Clara's, otherwise called Hutton's Island—there to die in obscurity.

A few days previous to his death he called his only son, Hugh, to his bedside, and enjoined him never to demand—never even to accept compensation from Congress for his services and his losses during the war.

"My fortune, my labor, my life-blood were not sold, but given to the cause of liberty and of my country," he said, and these were the last words of the sailor-patriot.

Hugh Hutton, the son, and now the sole representative of the family, was at this time about eighteen years old. Having lost his mother at an early age he had been taken by his father as a companion in all his sea voyages.

He had sailed with him in his first privateering expedition against the British ships. At first as a childish and innocent spectator, afterward as a youthful and enthusiastic actor, he had figured in all the sea-fights in which his father's ships had been engaged during the whole course of the war.

Thus all education, except that exclusively of the sailor and soldier, had been denied him. And thus Hugh Hutton, though tall, strong, handsome, and gallant, like all his race, was yet rude, unschooled, and unpolished.

He was faithful to the dying injunctions of his father. With many claims upon his country's remembrance and gratitude he set forth none.

Loving the ocean with the passionate enthusiasm of all his father's nature, he took to it as his natural element.

First he engaged in the humble capacity of mate on board the *Little Agnes*, a small schooner plying between Hutton Town and Baltimore or Alexandria, as the freight or market demanded.

After serving many years in this situation, an unexpected turn in the wheel of fortune gave him the means of purchasing a larger vessel of his own, and of extending the area of his trade and the length of his voyages. This was the death of the old ship-owner and captain with whom he had sailed for many years, and who, dying, left him all his moderate possessions on condition of his marrying his only daughter, then a mere child of fifteen years of age, and constituted him her guardian until the marriage. The heart of the brave young sailor had seldom or never turned on love or marriage—it was not the nature of his free, wild, adventurous race. But when he had buried his old captain in Baltimore, where he died, and taken the command of the little schooner to return home to Hutton Town to find his little ward and wife—then—ah! then all sorts of strange, sweet, sol-

emn, and tender thoughts of beauty, and love, and home, and repose swarmed about his heart.

It was late in the afternoon of a glorious October day that the schooner, with her crew, put into the harbor of Hutton's Inlet. In striking contrast to the warm-hued, deep-toned, refulgent natural scenery was the cold, white front of a mansion house standing upon a distant hill against the western horizon, and girt around with its old ancestral trees. This was Mount Calm, the seat of General Aaron Garnet.

The little schooner, with its white sail, glided swiftly and smoothly into the inlet, and cast anchor near the hamlet. Leaving the vessel in charge of the mate, Captain Hutton took a boat and went on shore. A crowd of villagers, as usual, thronged the beach, anxious to hear and to tell the news, and hearty greetings and noisy questions met him as he stepped upon the strand, such questions as:

"How is the old captain? How is old Seabright? Why don't he come ashore?—though there is evil news enough to meet him when he does come! Where is the jolly old dog, then? I guess he's wanting up at home there?" were some of the storm of words hailed upon him.

"Friends," replied the young sailor, shaking hands right and left as he pushed on, "our old captain is outward bound to that distant seaport whence no voyager ever returns. Permit me now to go on and break the sad news to his child."

"Stay! Poor old man, when did he die? What ailed him?" exclaimed two or three of the most persevering, detaining him.

"To-night, friends—to-night at the 'Neptune and Pan,' I will tell you all about it. Permit me now to pass on and take his last letter to his daughter," said the skipper good-humoredly, elbowing and pushing his way through the crowd.

"Stop! What's to become of the young girl—pretty Agnes Seabright? How did he leave his bit of property?"

"To-night, comrades—to-night, at the 'Neptune and Pan,' I will meet you. You shall have a supper, and drink to the memory of the outward-bound while I tell you all about it. I must go now!" impatiently exclaimed the captain, shaking off the pertinacious, and hastening away up the straggling street of the hamlet.

Hugh Hutton, like all his fathers, was far above the usual height of men—indeed, all his characteristics were not only marked, but extravagant; thus he was very tall, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, very muscular and thin, with a very dark complexion, with black hair and eyes, and very high, commanding features. Honest, brave, and frank even to rashness, generous even to extravagance, unselfish to the degree that the worldly-wise would call fatuity; yet he had never known a mother's care, a sister's companionship, and his indifference to home joys was as profound as his ignorance of love and of woman. Brought up on a ship's deck by a rough sailor father, he learned to love the ocean and wild liberty with a profound and passionate enthusiasm.

But now he had a little girl left to him. He must make a home for her, take care of her, and make her happy if he could. This was a very novel duty indeed, and set him very keenly to thinking. The first natural, strange, sweet fancies that had been awakened by the idea of this lovely living legacy had fallen asleep again, and left him to his normal, free, glad, but hard, unloving nature. And now the thought of pretty Agnes Seabright fretted him like a fetter.

He pursued his walk up through the village, up over the hills rising one beyond the other, until he came to the arm of the forest stretching around the base of that tallest distant hill, upon which stood the white-fronted mansion house of Mount Calm. He pursued his walk on through this arm of the forest, ascending the hill until he came to a small cleared space, in which was a little cot inclosed within a narrow garden and nearly hidden with trees. He opened the small gate and passed up the narrow walk between rows of marigolds, crim-

son, white, and yellow chrysanthemums, scarlet verbena and other bright fall flowers, to the little door at which he rapped.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRIDE OF THE ISLES.

A beautiful and happy girl,
With step as soft as summer air,
And fresh young lips and brow of pearl
Shadowed by many a careless curl
Of unconfined and flowing hair;
A seeming child in everything,
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
As nature wears the smile of spring,
When sinking into summer's arms.

—*Whittier.*

THE door was opened by a beautiful girl between fourteen and fifteen years old, not tall for her age, but full-formed and exquisitely proportioned. Her features were regular, with the "sweet, low brow," and straight nose and arched lips of the Grecian profile; her eyes were of dark and melting hue, and her dark, rich auburn hair, parted over a forehead of snowy fairness, dropped in a mass of irregular ringlets down cheeks of carnation dye. The idea she inspired was that of a richness and fullness of life.

She stood within the door with a smile, awaiting the pleasure of the stranger, whose knock had summoned her. Captain Hugh had never seen Agnes Seabright before, so that he handed her the letter, saying:

"I think that this is for you?"

She took it, and was about in her haste to break the seal and possess herself of the contents, when her eyes alighted on these words, written on the corner: "To make my little girl acquainted with Mr. Hutton, my mate and good friend." Then she raised her eyes from the letter in her hand to Hugh Hutton's face. Then

she offered her hand shyly but kindly, while she said, simply:

"How do you do, Mr. Hutton? Will you walk in and sit down, and excuse me while I read father's letter? I have not heard from him for so long," she said, as they walked into the parlor.

He sat down in a large flag-bottomed chair and began to draw figures on the sanded floor with a stick, while she retired to an end window to read her father's farewell letter.

Captain Hutton watched her growing pale and paler as she read the letter to its close—as she folded it and advanced trembling to his side—as she laid her hand heavy from faintness on his arm, and speaking in thick, faltering tones, said:

"Tell me! I don't—I'm afraid to understand what this means! But, my father—where is he gone?"

Hugh took both her hands in his, while the folded letter fell to the ground, looked full, looked kindly and gravely into her set and anxious eyes, and answered slowly:

"To heaven, Agnes."

He would have held her hands longer, gazed longer upon that beautiful but troubled countenance, as to impart his own strength and composure, but she withdrew her fingers, sank down upon a chair, and covered her face with her hands. Soon between the fingers copious tears flowed. Then she arose and slowly left the room.

What was to be done with this young and beautiful girl? To be sure, there was Hugh's own home on Hutton Island, and there was Miss Josephine Cotter, Hugh's maiden aunt; but the home was so poor, and Miss Joe—so queer! There was no knowing how Miss Joe might receive this poor child, so much in need of love and sympathy and care just now. After ruminating a long time he could think of no better plan than to at least consult Miss Joe upon the subject. So, his hours for the evening being all pre-engaged, he determined to go home early the next morning to break the news to his aunt.

. . . . . .

"You must perceive, Aunt Joe, that I'm in a serious dilemma."

"Well, then, here! take this reel and wind off this hank o' yarn, while I foot my stocking. People needn't be idle while they're talking. More idle time is spent talking than any other way—as if people's hands and tongues would not go at the same time."

Hugh obeyed with a good-humored laugh. At last:

"Well, aunt?" he said.

"Well, Hugh! Now begin, and tell me all over, all about it, for I don't know as I understand it—quite!"

Hugh recapitulated the history of Captain Seabright's illness and death, his last will and testament, and finally the embarrassment in which he found Agnes Seabright and the relation in which he stood toward her, concluding with:

"Now, what am I to do with her, aunt?"

"Marry her, Hugh. There is no home open to the orphan but this—nor this, unless you marry her first. You promised to wed her—you mean to wed her—why not do it at once? Will the marriage rite hurt or inconvenience you? Just let the marriage ceremony, which gives you a lawful claim to her, and which gives her the right to live here in this house as its mistress, and which will shut the mouths of the gossips for ever—be performed. 'An ounce of preventive is better than a pound of cure,' even in matters of gossip. Then bring her here to me. I'll be a mother to the child. I'll do the best I can for her. I'll make her feel at home, and make her happy, even on this lonesome island."

The next morning Hugh spent with Agnes Seabright. And after that he visited her every day, until the orphan's tears were nearly dried and the maiden's heart won.

For the reception of the bride Miss Joe was making every preparation which she could make without spending, or, as she called it, "heaving away of" money. Hugh schemed "to draw all points to one," so that the marriage should take place upon the very day on which he was to sail for Baltimore preparatory to a longer trip

to the West Indies. So, very early on a glorious autumn morning, while the rising sun was shining splendidly into the chapel windows, the marriage ceremony was quietly performed in the village church by the village parson.

Immediately after the ceremony was concluded Hugh tucked Agnes under one arm and Miss Joe under the other, and hurried down to the beach to get them on board the boat. He lifted Agnes into the skiff, handed Miss Joe after her, and, entering himself, laid his hand vigorously to the oar, and they sped down the stream and over the bright waters.

It was a golden morning—grand, exultant, inspiring! Out before them rolled the boundless, the magnificent sea, with its myriads beyond myriads of waves, leaping, flashing, sparkling, scintillating like fluid emeralds in the dazzling splendor of the morning sun.

As he looked upon this scene Hugh's eyes kindled, blazed. He did not see how sad was the brow of his young bride. No! the sea-king had already risen above the lover.

At last the island lay before them like a line of gold. He rowed swiftly for it. Soon they landed on the glittering strand. It was here they parted.

"And—be kind to my little Agnes!" he whispered, as he took leave of the old lady.

"Now, Agnes," he said, as he folded her to his bosom and pressed his first and farewell kiss upon her lips.

Then he sprang into the boat and struck out to sea in the direction of his vessel, riding at anchor at about a half league's distance, and which was to sail with the tide.

"Come, Agnes," said Miss Joe, kindly taking her arm to draw it within her own.

"Not yet—not just yet! And, if you please, just let me watch until the boat gets out of sight."

"Honey, it will put your eyes out to try to look upon this sparkling sea. Come; breakfast is waiting for us. I know."

"I wish he had only stayed to breakfast with us! I

could have parted with him better then, if I had known he had eaten a good, warm breakfast."

"The tide wouldn't wait, you know, child, and he will get his breakfast on board his vessel. Why, what's the matter, Agnes? I do believe you like him already! I do believe you're sorry he's gone!"

"He was my only friend! Since father died I was getting used to him," said Agnes, bursting into tears.

"Well, I declare to man, if it is not wonderful! All them Huttons had never seemed to value woman's love —have every one of them always got more than they deserved. Come, Agnes; the boat is quite out of sight now; come home and take a cup of coffee, child; it will cheer you up."

"Do you think he is safe on board of his vessel yet?"

"Oh, yes, of course! Come, a cup of coffee is first-rate for trouble—'cause, you see, I've tried it! Come, honey!"

And Miss Joe drew Agnes' arm within her own and walked up the isle toward the cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

HUTTON LODGE.

A snug thatch house; before the door a green;
Hens in the middling; ducks and geese are seen;
On this side stands a coop; on that a pen;
A wood-pile joins.

—*Allan Ramsay.*

HUTTON LODGE, on Hutton's Island, had been built in he palmy days of the family's prosperity.

It was to this lodge that Captain Hugh Hutton of Revolutionary memory had retired with his sole female relative, his sister-in-law, Miss Josephine Cotter. And here, after his death, had the good woman continued to live.

And here was Hugh Hutton's home whenever his ship

would be in port. And finally, it was to this lodge, or cottage, as he called it, that Miss Joe conducted her young charge, the widowed bride.

The days were all occupied with work—yes, hard work. All day long the whir of the flying shuttle, and the dull, monotonous clap-clap of the warp-rammer would be heard, as Miss Joe sat at her loom; and the hum of the great spinning-wheel as Agnes stood and spun. Agnes had no motive under the sun for her industry but Hugh's interest and Hugh's pleasure. To become an efficient help-meet for Hugh—to be an industrious and saving little housekeeper for Hugh's profit. And when Miss Joe praised her docility and perseverance, poor girl, she felt as though she were receiving Hugh's approval. Sometimes she would be tempted to think a little hardly of his having gone to sea so instantly after their marriage, but when this thought took the hue of blame she banished it at once. But—did he love her at all, when he could leave her so soon, and with so little emotion? She feared not. Would he ever love her as she loved him—as she wished to be loved? She knew herself to be beautiful and attractive. She would have been an idiot not to have known it. In her deep and secret heart, while never acknowledging her purpose to herself, she sought to adapt herself to her circumstances and duties, and fit herself to win Hugh's approval and love. Such were her silent dreams and reveries by day, while her spinning-wheel whirled under her hand, and the incessant clap-clap of Miss Joe's loom sounded on her ear from the other corner. And so November and the greater part of December passed, when a letter came from Hugh announcing his speedy return home.

At length the important day dawned; it was Christmas Eve. The snow was two feet deep on the ground, and crusted with a coat of ice thick enough to bear the heaviest footsteps without breaking through. The day was cold, crisp, but clear.

It was nearly sunset when Agnes went up into her room for the fiftieth time that day to look at the sea for a sail. It was very cold, and there was no fire, so

Agnes thought just to give one sweeping glance over the waters and then retire, when her eye alighted on a distant sail making toward the isle. She wrapped a large woolen shawl around herself and sat down to watch what might come. The vessel bore down rapidly upon the island. When within about a quarter of a mile and bearing away westward toward the mainland, she lowered a boat with two rowers, who pulled swiftly toward the island landing. Agnes recognized Hugh and one of his crew. She started and ran downstairs, exclaiming as she burst into the kitchen:

"Hugh is coming! Hugh is almost here, aunt! I saw him in the boat!"

"Is he?" said the old lady quietly. "Well, then, honey, do you take some water upstairs in—in—in my—no, your room for him to wash, while I put up the supper, so that he needn't wait."

Agnes complied, arranging everything neatly and conveniently, and then returned to the kitchen to assist Miss Joe in arranging the supper on the table.

They had scarcely completed their task before a sharp rap was instantly followed by the pushing open of the door, and Hugh entered alone, vigorously stamping the snow off his feet.

Miss Joe looked at the snow and her soiled floor, and sighed heavily and shook her head before she even advanced to welcome her nephew.

That greeting over, Hugh extended his hand to his young wife with a "How do you do, Agnes, my dear?" and threw himself heavily into a great armchair by the fire.

Yes! it seemed but too true! The little love Agnes had inspired him with during their short acquaintance had all evaporated during the not much longer sea voyage!

Would he go to his room and change his dress? Would he have water? Everything was in readiness for him upstairs.

No! he would stay here in this armchair by the chimney corner until they should sit down to tea. He did

not wish to give anybody any trouble. He begged that they would take none. Besides, he was so glad to see his good aunt and little Agnes that he did not wish to lose a single moment of their company for the little time that he had to stay with them."

Then Miss Joe invited him, as soon as he should feel himself sufficiently rested, to take off his overcoat and sit down to supper.

Then Hugh arose, and Agnes quietly took his hat and Miss Joe drew off his overcoat and inducted him into his seat at the table. The supper was a feast. Besides the usual indispensables of coffee, rich cream, fresh butter and light bread, there were oysters and wild duck, stewed fruit, cakes, and so on.

Hugh asked Agnes how she liked her island home. This was the first question he had put to her since his return.

Agnes answered that she liked it very well. Did she not find it lonesome?

"No, indeed."

Poor Agnes in her desire to be agreeable was totally unconscious of her falsehood.

Then Hugh turned to Miss Joe, inquiring kindly after her health.

Oh, her health was always good, and had never been better than at this moment.

When tea was over and the table cleared away they all drew around the fire. Miss Joe, with her reel and yarn, and Agnes sitting idle in compliment of Hugh's return.

Hugh, on his part, began to tell them of his voyage, of his success, of his happiness to find himelf at home again; of a certain large and well-filled box which he hoped might be acceptable to his aunt and Agnes. Whereupon Miss Joe began an exordium on the sin of "heaving away" money, which was gently cut short by Hugh, who, rising up, announced that he really ought to have been back to his vessel an hour before, and that he must now take leave of them.

"When shall we see you again?"

"To-morrow, about noon."

"What! not before?"

"No; I have to go to Huttontown."

"Well, you'll stay when you do come?"

"I am afraid I cannot promise you, indeed, aunt; but, at all events, I will see you every day, and make it a point to spend the whole of Christmas Day with you. Good-night, aunt! Good-night, Agnes, my dear!"

A week passed, during which Hugh was for the most part at the cottage.

New Year's Day dawned. It was the last day he had to stay at home. They spent this holiday very much as they had spent Christmas Day—going to church at Huttontown in the forenoon and returning to the isle to dinner. After dinner Hugh took them to the mainland, where he hired a sleigh and gave them a long, fine run over the frozen snow.

The next morning Hugh came early—unknown to Aunt Joe, however, who was outdoors giving directions to Pontius Pilate about his day's work. She had returned to the kitchen and was busily engaged, as usual, at her loom, when she was very much astounded by a noise on the stairs as of a man's heavy footsteps, and the stair-door was pushed open and Hugh appeared, porter-like, with a great trunk—Agnes' trunk—upon his shoulders, a basket in his hand, and a bandbox under his arm, and followed by Agnes herself, dressed in traveling gear, with another basket and a bundle.

Miss Joe stared in amazement, without being able to articulate.

"Why, what in the name of all the saints in heaven does all this here mean?"

"I am going to take Agnes to sea with me," said Hugh.

The old lady broke out into loud sobs for company.

Hugh set his trunk, bandbox, and basket down upon the floor and set himself to the task of comforting and soothing both.

Miss Joe was the first to recover.

"Come here, Aggy, my darling child! You have been

like a darter to me, honey. Kiss me again. Since you will go, Aggy, God bless you, my child! God bless you! I shall comfort myself very well by weaving cloth and flannel, and making counterpanes for you against you come back. Good-by!" And she embraced Agnes fondly and lifted and placed in her hands the basket and bundle.

Hugh now came forward, and, for the second time, bade his aunt farewell; and, resuming his bundles, trunk, bandbox, basket, etc., set out for the beach.

"If I'd only known, I'd a' had a cup of coffee ready for you," said the old lady; and she looked really pitiable as she stood there in her solitude, watching them as they went down to the beach and embarked on board the little boat and sped toward the distant ship. Having with the aid of a spyglass seen them embark on board the ship, Miss Joe turned into her lonely home and began preparing her solitary meal.

CHAPTER X.

THE PATIENCE OF ALICE.

Thou must endure, yet loving all the while,
  Above, yet never separate from thy kind;
Meet every frailty with the gentlest smile,
  Though to no possible depth of evil blind,
This is the riddle thou hast life to solve;
  But in the task thou shalt not work alone,
For while the worlds about the sun revolve,
  God's heart and mind are ever with His own.
—*J. Monckton Milnes.*

It is now twelve years since the marriage of Alice Chester and General Garnet, and six months since the departure of Hugh Hutton and Agnes upon their sea voyage.

General Garnet is absent on an electioneering tour, but daily expected back.

It is June, and the scene is the terrace in front of Mount Calm. There are four persons upon the terrace.

Alice occupies a rustic seat under the shadow of a locust tree. She is still a most beautiful woman, very delicate, almost sylph-like, with her fair, blond beauty and airy, white muslin wrapper. She is calmly pursuing a piece of fine, white, knitting-work—that favorite busy idleness of all Maryland ladies. At her feet is a very small basket, containing her keys and the ball of lamb's wool yarn from which she knits. Near her stands a young mulatto hand-maid of about ten years of age.

Lower down upon a step of the terrace sits her daughter Alice, or Elsie, as she was called for distinction's sake. Elsie is now a very beautiful child, promising to be much more beautiful than her mother had ever been. She strangely united the most beautiful features of both parents. She had the delicate, Grecian features, fair, roseate complexion, golden hair, and blue eyes of her mother, with the passionate, veiled gaze and bewildering smile of her father. She had a finer vital and sanguine temperament than either could have possessed; a more rounded form, more elastic motion, a more joyous expression, a more gladsome cadence in her speech and in her laughter. Elsie sat sketching an elm tree from nature—the tree stood before her, at some distance on the lawn. She was bending over her drawing-board, that rested on her lap, until her fair ringlets almost concealed her rosy cheeks. She, also, wore a simple white muslin dress that harmonized well with her blooming beauty. Behind her, bending over her, stood a youth of sixteen; but for height, for breadth of shoulders and depth of chest, and manly and athletic proportions generally he might have been taken for twenty years of age. He was a very handsome boy, with bright chestnut hair, waving around a massive brow and relieving and beautifying its heavy strength, gracefully as foliage shades rock. He seemed to have just returned from gunning, for he wore a dress of forest green, his cap lay at his feet, his pointers were near, and one hand rested upon a fowling-piece, while with the other he

pointed alternately to the elm tree and the drawing, giving Elsie some instruction in her work. His dark gray eyes, full of thought, truth, and affection, were fixed upon her.

And while they pursued their work Alice, from her rustic seat, watched them. Alice, looking as serenely happy as though her heart had never been broken, her brain never been crazed by calamity, anguish, and despair verging upon madness; as healthful, amiable, and self-possessed as though she had never sworn in her frenzy that she could not survive the severance from Sinclair; that neither moral, intellectual, nor physical nature could stand the test—the misery of a life with Garnet.

But Divine Providence is kind, and nature is full of remedial power. We have all strength given us according to our need. If our joys are greater in anticipation than in realization, so certainly are our sorrows.

Alice, in the terrible storm of passion that had temporarily dethroned her reason, believed that she could not outlive her marriage; yet she had lived twelve years, and was comparatively happy—possibly happier than many a girl who had married for love, or its semblance.

It is true that from the hour she awoke from the strange torpor that immediately followed her marriage her religious principles had taught her to turn from the memory of Sinclair, whenever that memory recurred. She prayed against, she strove against it, wrenched her thoughts forcibly from it, and riveted them to something else. And her prayers and struggles had produced this happy effect. The image of Sinclair had faded away with the brightest visions of her girlhood. And now that that typhoon of youthful passion had long passed, and even its memory had almost faded away, her genial, affectionate, religious nature made her happy. With such a nature Alice could not live without forming attachments to those around her. He must have been a terrible brute who could not have been blessed with some portion of her affection by simply living in the house with her for twelve years. And General Garnet

was not exactly a brute. He was very handsome, graceful, and accomplished and habitually polite. And now that time had long worn out his jealousy he had ceased all undignified and ungentlemanly interference with his wife's specially feminine occupations and associations. Alice was happy with her housekeeping, her garden, her dairy, her country neighbors, her favorite Magnus, and her little daughter. Yet, had the Angel of Destiny whispered to her heart this alternative: "Your daughter! two fates await her—to die in her childhood, or live to be an unwilling bride—choose for her!" Alice would have answered with a shudder and without a moment's hesitation: "Let her die in her childhood rather. Let her die now, rather!" And to have saved her from the misery of wedding one she could not love, Alice would have been content to lay her heart's only treasure, her idolized child, in the grave.

But no such question of Destiny had yet called back the memory of the past, and Alice was happy as she drew out her knitting-needle and smiled at the boy and girl on the terrace.

At last the sketch was finished and Magnus pronounced it perfect, and threw his shoulders back with a yawn of relief, and brought his hands together with a ring, exclaiming, as he turned to Alice:

"Now, cousin, let me order the horses and let us ride at once to the beach. Why, here's Goliah come from the post office—with a letter, too!"

"It is from the general, madam," continued Magnus, receiving the letter from the boy and handing it to Alice. She opened and glanced through it. Then turning to the expectant child, she said:

"Elsie, your father will be home this evening. He will bring with him Judge Wylie, Mr. Ulysses Wylie, Mr. Hardcastle, and Mr. Lionel Hardcastle. He requests me to have supper ready for the party."

Alice was soon superintending the preparations for supper. She had a good deal of the pride of the housekeeper and the hostess about her. Every Maryland woman has.

And that evening General Garnet entertained his friends to his heart's content. It was a sort of little political party, at which Mrs. Garnet was not expected to appear.

After supper Lionel and Ulysses left the grave conclave of politicians to the discussion of Congress and canvas-back ducks, and came out upon the green.

Lionel was full of the new good fortune that had befallen him. The dearest wish of his life was gratified; his father had at last obtained for him a midshipman's warrant and he was going to sea. Alice looked at the wild and willful youth with much anxiety, and wished in her heart that it might have been otherwise; that he might have been forced to stay under his father's protection and surveillance.

Lionel also, in his frank, off-hand manner, informed his Cousin Magnus there before them all that his father had not forgotten him, either; that he had arranged with a celebrated physician of Baltimore to receive him as a student.

Magnus received this news with feelings of blended pain and pleasure—pain at the thought of leaving his dear "Cousin Alice" and her beautiful child—pleasure at the idea of the opening prospect of study, improvement, and independence.

Elsie never thought of the evil; she only thought of the good; she threw her arms around his neck and wished him joy and success.

But Alice was much more depressed than the occasion seemed to warrant. Again she caught herself wishing that young people could possibly remain at home. All partings depressed her. The idea of these saddened her.

Was the cloud on her beautiful face really sorrow at the certainty of losing her loving boy-friend, or was it the shadow of coming events? Alice sighed heavily as she watched the young people dance. And at an early hour she recalled them to the house, served them with refreshments, and, pleading great fatigue, dismissed them all to their several chambers.

She then threw herself languidly into the great easy-

chair to await the breaking up of the party and the appearance of General Garnet. She had scarcely had an opportunity of speaking to him since his return.

It was not very long before she heard the gentle, cheerful bustle of the departing guests, and the ringing tones of Judge Wylie's voice above all the rest, inviting everybody to Point Pleasant the next evening for the purpose of meeting everybody else.

When the last guest had departed General Garnet entered Alice's parlor.

"Up yet, Mrs. Garnet! Have I been so unfortunate as to disturb your rest?"

"No—oh, no! I think you were very quiet for a party of gentlemen—not at all like the noisy parties Judge Wylie gathers. No; I had no opportunity of welcoming you home," she said rising and offering her hand. "Have you had a pleasant journey?"

"A successful one, madam, which is better. I think that there can be no reasonable doubt that D—— will carry the majority of votes in the districts through which we traveled."

Her next question was a housekeeper's query:

"How did you like your supper, and were your guests pleased?"

"All was very well, Alice—and, could they be else than pleased after so triumphant a canvass?" said he, taking a seat and motioning Alice to do the same. "I have something to propose to you, Alice, in regard to our daughter."

"Our daughter!" repeated she, with a vague fear creeping over her heart.

"Yes, our girl. I scarcely approve the loose, irregular manner in which her education is conducted at home."

"It may appear to you so, because her occupations and amusements are so various; but, indeed, her habits—all habits, I mean, upon which health and improvement depend—are very regular; and for the rest, human nature itself—health, improvement—require some little irregularity. The rain does not fall and the sun shine upon

set days. See what a bright, healthful, happy, intelligent child Elsie is! Part of that is owing to her habits. She rises very early, breakfasts early, rides with Magnus or one of the servants, returns and devotes three hours to her books."

"Yes, all that is very well, but there should be a systematic course of study, which, I fancy, you are not quite competent to direct."

"Try me," said Alice. "I have not been idle all my life, nor all my life occupied exclusively with the eating, drinking, and wearing interests of our family. I have found time to cultivate my mind, for Elsie's sake. I have read and reflected much. I expected to be Elsie's only teacher. I have been, hitherto. And I wish, above all things, to continue to be. Then I shall feel better assured of her best good; better assured that her affections will not run to waste while her intellect is cultivated."

"'A little learning is a dangerous thing.' It makes anyone conceited—especially, I think, a woman who has few opportunities of comparing her ignorance with other people's knowledge," muttered General Garnet to himself. Then slightly raising his voice, he said: "No, Alice, it will not do. Elsie cannot remain under your tuition. I have other and wiser plans for her."

"I suppose," said Alice, in a low voice, "that you are thinking of employing a private governess or tutor. Well, if you think it best——"

"No, Alice, I have no faith in governesses, and I totally disapprove of private tutors for young ladies. My intention is to send Elsie to a boarding-school for the next six or seven years."

"To boarding-school for seven years! Elsie, my darling, my only one, away from me for so long! She!—so young!—to go among total strangers for so long! No! you cannot mean it!" exclaimed Alice, rising and wringing her hands.

"Sit down, Mrs. Garnet, and listen to me."

Alice sank into her seat again, and listened.

"There is no female academy of the first class in this

country, I am sorry to say; none, at least, at which I should like to place our only daughter."

Alice's hopes raised; she thought she might have misunderstood what he had said before—her mind was so confused. She hastened to say:

"Oh, then, you are thinking of some very accomplished woman, or some highly intellectual graduate of William and Mary, who, though not exactly an ordinary governess or tutor, may be induced to come and take charge of our little girl for a very liberal salary?"

General Garnet waved his hand impatiently.

"Hear me out, if you please, Mrs. Garnet. I have told you that I dislike private tutors and governesses! I dislike the idea of a stranger domesticated in the house very much. I said, besides, that there was no boarding-school in the country to which I could care to trust our daughter. I intend to send Elsie to England."

"To England!" murmured Alice, in an inaudible voice, growing very pale and sinking back in her chair.

"Yes, to England. My friend, General A—— is going out there as minister. He takes all his family, of course. He expects to remain abroad many years. In talking over with me his prospects, among other things for which he congratulated himself was the opportunity that his residence abroad would afford giving his daughters a very superior education. While we conversed, I spoke of Alice, regretting the limited means of female education afforded by our country. Well, he proposed that I should commit my daughter to his charge, to go to England, and be put to school with his own. He pressed this favor very earnestly upon me. The opportunity was one not likely to occur again, and therefore not to be lightly thrown away. Finally I accepted his offer. It was all arranged between us. The embassy sails from Baltimore in two weeks, and before that time Elsie must be ready to join the family."

. . . . . .

In the course of the month their departure took place from the neighborhood.

Elsie Garnet, with many tears, left for her English

school under the protection of the American minister to the Court of St. James.

Lionel Hardcastle sailed as midshipman aboard the United States ship *Falcon*.

And Magnus Hardcastle, taking a most affectionate leave of his beautiful friend, Alice, and promising many letters, left for Baltimore to enter upon the study of medical science in the office of a distinguished physician.

CHAPTER XI.

ALICE'S VISIT TO HUTTON ISLE.

At eve a sail
On the blue water with a freshening gale."
—*Crabbe.*

It was a bright evening near the last of October. The mail had just come in, and brought Alice letters to gladden her heart for many months. There was a letter from Magnus—that strong, confident, joyous Magnus, who always saw so much good and glory in the future. And there was one post-marked London, and ship-marked *Belle Agnes*, from Elsie—the healthful, hopeful, happy Elsie, who always made the best of everything, and was gladsome everywhere. No letter could be more replete with the tenderest filial affection than hers, yet there was not a word of home-sickness, or sorrow, or discontent in it. It was full of genial life, of happy love, and confident hope.

Alice kissed the loving letter again and again, and walked about, happy, restless, overjoyed. General Garnet was away from home again, as he was about half the time. And Alice, after she had read the welcome letter to all the confidential servants who loved Elsie, bethought herself—by way of expending some of the extra life she had received—of going over to see Miss Joe and telling the old lady that her nephew's vessel was

in port, for that she had got letters by it. She had frequently gone on to Hutton's Isle to cheer the lonely old woman, and she knew the old soul would also be delighted to hear from Elsie.

Alice told Diogenes, the colored servant, to get the one-horse chaise and take her over to Huttontown. The chaise was soon ready. Alice entered it and was driven by Diogenes over to the village. She left the chaise at the 'Neptune and Pan,' and, attended by Diogenes, went down to the beach. The afternoon was very clear and calm:

"The air was still and the water still,"

and she felt no uneasiness in trusting herself to the little skiff and the one oar to the old servant.

As they glided over the silent waters the profound stillness of the air and water was vaguely disturbed by a distant, deep-toned, solemn moan, swelling on the horizon like the breeze upon a mammoth harp-string, and dying away in the deep of silence.

"Did you hear that?" asked Alice of her attendant.

"No, ma'am, I heard nothing, Miss Ally," replied the obtuse negro.

And Alice thought she was mistaken. The bay was perfectly smooth, yet it seemed to Alice that the vast body of water under them just perceptibly rose and fell, as though instinct with life and breath. The little skiff sped like an arrow across the bosom of the waters, and in something less than half an hour cleared the distance between the mainland and the isle. The old negro stuck his oar into the sand and shoved the boat up high and dry upon the beach, so that his mistress could step out dry-shod.

"Does not the wind blow around this bleak island even when it is calm along the coast of the mainland?" asked Alice, as she gathered her flapping veil and shawl more closely around her and stepped out upon the strand.

"La, no, Miss Ally, ma'am; it never doesn't, of course; dough when der is a win', it has more 'siderable of a

clean sweep here than anywhere else. No, Miss Ally, no, ma'am; but de win' do seem for to be a-risin'."

"Come, let us hurry on to the house, for really it is quite fresh," said she, drawing her veil down over her face and under her shawl, and wrapping the latter more closely around her, and striking into the narrow path leading through the cornfield and up to the house. But when she had got about halfway up the hill the wind took her so fiercely, flapping her skirts about her feet, flapping her bonnet and veil about her face, that she was forced to turn around from the wind to recover her breath and strength.

"I can scarcely face this gale! How very suddenly it has sprung up!"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the old negro, looking uneasily at the sky; "I—I—mos' wish us hadn't a-ventured out! I—I—I do hope us aint a-gwine to have a squeeling, knocking storm afore us gits back!"

"Oh, it is entirely too late in the season for an equinoctial storm," replied Alice, following his glance to the sky. "The wind has blown a few straggling clouds up from the horizon, but it does not look at all threatening."

"Ah, Miss Ally, you don't know, honey! Der aint never no good in dem ar switchy mare's tails!" replied Diogenes, pointing to the long, black, ragged clouds flying before the wind. Holding her head down, and hugging her shawl tightly about her, Alice pushed on toward the house.

Looking up as she reached the top of the hill she saw Miss Joe with her head far out of the gable end loft window, with an old spyglass in her hand, leveling it out to sea. Miss Joe lowered her glass for a moment and perceived Alice, and shouted to her above the blast:

"How do you do, Mrs. Garnet? Hasn't this here bluff of wind come up sudden? 'Taint a-going to be anything but a wind, though, I believe. Come up to the house, honey. I'll be down from here about the time you get up. I have just been looking out after that there vessel down the bay, as I think must be Hugh's, seeing I'm expecting him. I spied that there craft about two hours

ago. She was making slow headway, because the tide was strong agin her. Now she seems farther off than before. I shouldn't wonder if this gust of wind, with the current, didn't blow her out to sea agin. I hope it aint nothing but a gust, though, that 'll soon be over. The wind bluffs around as if it were a-going to change too; then it 'll be fair for her, and she'll scud along fast enough before it. Come up to the house, honey! I'm coming down."

Alice reached the garden gate just as Miss Joe opened the house door and came out to meet her, her clothes all blown aslant and flapping about as if they would go over her head, but looking so hardy, sturdy, storm-proof, with her shining face rubicund with joy and welcome, Alice laughed out to see her.

"Dear Miss Joe! you look chirping as a frosty morning! It enlivens one to see you! I have heard of people who, going out for wool, returned shorn. I have come to cheer you, and shall go home gladdened! You look so chirp!"

"Oh, honey! I have enough to chirrup me. I'm heern from Hugh and his wife. You saw that sloop in at Hutton's Harbor? Well, that there sloop, she came from the port of Baltimore, where she spoke the *Belle Agnes*, jest in from Liverpool, and brought a letter from Captain Hutton, saying as he should run down here soon as ever he unloaded his cargo and took in some freight for this here port. His letter says how Agnes is going for to stay long o' me now. 'Deed, I reckon she's had enough o' sea-faring, a'ready!" said Miss Joe, as she straddled on toward the gate and opened it.

Very soon the neat tea-table was set out and a repast, delicate and luxurious as any epicure could have desired, spread upon it. And Miss Joe arranged Alice in a comfortable seat at the side of the table near the fire, and as she poured out the fragrant tea she told all the story of the letter she had got from Hugh. How they had made such a prosperous voyage; how Hugh was going to stay home for three months; how Agnes was not going away again at all; and how she supposed Agnes was

cured of her curiosity to see the ocean. And through all her talk Alice saw how much family affection was in that old frost-bitten heart of hers.

CHAPTER XII.

CHILD OF THE WRECK.

The strife of fiends is on the battling clouds,
The glare of hell is in the sulphurous lightnings.
This is no earthly storm!

—*Maturin's Bertram.*

THE sun went down. The wind seemed to lull. Alice arose and put on her bonnet and shawl for a start. Old Diogenes buttoned his coat up to his chin, and took up his old felt hat to attend her. Miss Joe threw her check apron over her head to accompany them, and the little party opened the door and set out for the beach. The eyes of old Diogenes rolled

"From heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,"

in a great trouble!

Though the sun had but just set, the sky was no longer blue, but of a lurid, metallic, coppery color, mottled over by leaden clouds, athwart which, and lower down, scudded huge, black, inky masses of vapor, driven wildly before the wind that had shifted and was again rising. Lower down and nearer the earth flew other clouds, flocks of wild sea fowl, screaming frightfully and dashing hither and thither, or settling upon the island as for shelter from the coming tempest. Such was the sky.

The look of the sea was still more terrible. The surface of the water was very rough, the waves breaking into foam as though frost were thrown up from the depths of the sea. The whole enormous mass of waters was rising with a vast, slow, mighty swell, as though

some monstrous under-power were laboring to upheave the ocean from its bed and shatter it into precipices and caverns. And all around the lurid horizon boomed the low, deep, awful sound of the coming storm.

"It will never do to try to cross the water to-night, my dear child," said Miss Joe, solemnly and fearfully. "We're going to have an awful storm, and it may burst upon us at any minute."

"'Deed, Miss Ally, child, it's wery unsafe—wery! Don't let's be a-tempting o' Providence! Don't!" said Diogenes, his teeth chattering with cold and terror.

Just then the voice of the wind wailed across the waters like the shriek of a lost spirit, and the salt spray of the sea was dashed in their faces. The sky seemed to be settling down over the isle, and the waters, black, heavy, and dark! The mighty sea was heaving, settling, rising to meet the lowered sky! The vapor of the clouds and waves seemed intermingling! The rising wind howled and shrieked!

"Well, child, if you venter upon the water this evening, you'll row to the Kingdom of Heaven," said Miss Joe. "Turn—hurry back! We must get to the house as fast as possible, or the storm will be upon us! Child, alive! what are you standing looking out to sea for? I do believe you are more afraid of braving General Garnet's anger than that of the wind and sea themselves."

"I should not have come," said Alice, turning shuddering, away from the beach.

"Yes, you should!" replied Miss Joe; "and now you should come back! Hurry! hurry! hurry! Look at that mass of black cloud rushing like a demon up the sky!"

It was now very dark, and they hastened on toward the house. They reached it as a furious blast of wind drove them against its walls. They went in the house. Shutters were closed, props were placed against the doors to assist the old locks in holding them against the fury of the storm. And as the room was now pitch dark, except by the lurid light of the smoldering fire, Miss Joe lit a candle and set it on the mantelpiece. Alice sat down in the chimney-corner armchair, very pale

The storm raged, shrieked and howled around the house. Hourly its violence increased; tenfold the crash of falling trees, twisted off at the roots, the clatter of rattling tiles and shingles, reft off and rained down from the roof; the scream of the frightened water-fowl, the howl of the alarmed cattle, mingled with the shriek of the wind and the thunder of the waves in the grand diapason of nature's wildest, most terrific harmony.

At last came the awful crisis of the storm. The wind had

"Paused to gather its fearful breath."

and now rushed upon the house with the invincible power of a storming battery, with a sound, a shock, as if two planets had met in fatal concussion. The earth trembled; the massive roof of the strong house was torn off and hurled aloft; heavy blocks of sandstone came clattering down from the topmost wall, and then the rain fell its vast sheets, as if "all heaven was opened." And now came a sound more terrific than that of an advancing army!

The ocean was upon them in its might!

Speechless with awe, like those in the immediate presence of sudden death, Alice and Miss Joe remained locked in each other's arms. The old negro ran wildly about, like one perfectly distracted, screaming:

"Oh, my God! my God! we shall be all drowned in this very house, like blind puppies in a tub! Oh, will nobody 'fess me o' my sins? Oh, Lord! I 'fess to de breaking o' all de 'mandments, rather dan miss absolushum for dem as I has broke!"

And so he ran about and raved, while Alice and Miss Joe remained motionless, waiting for death where they sat.

The water that dashed against the wall was no longer the rain, but the sea—the sea cannonading the house!

An hour like an eternity passed, during which the waves, with deafening sounds, stormed the walls, and the inmates waited for death. Then the horrible tempest seemed to abate; the ocean seemed to be retiring.

Oh, were the waves indeed receding, or was it only one of those fatal pauses, during which the storm fiend gathered new strength for destruction?

Alice, fearful, hopeful, raised her head, doubtful of the reprieve from immediate death.

Miss Joe clasped her closer in her arms, but listened.

Diogenes stopped in his wild walk and began to praise all the saints.

Yes, the ocean was certainly receding. They were saved! But now, amidst their joy, came a knell of doom!

The signal gun of a ship in distress!

No one knew how often that knell had pealed before. It could not have been heard, amid the deafening noise of the waves, any more than the report of a single cannon could have been distinguished in the thunder of a million others. The sound struck to the hearts of all present.

"Oh!" said Miss Joe, "that ship! that ship! It is the very ship I spied—I know it is—I know it is! And, oh! it may be the ship of Hugh!"

Again the minute gun boomed over the sea.

"Oh, Heaven, how I pity them! What can be the nature of their danger? The storm has almost ceased; if they could live through that terrific tempest, surely they can save themselves now. What can be the danger to which they are exposed now?" asked Alice.

"The ship, tossed about so in the horrible storm, must a' sprung a leak. Oh, if it should be Hugh's ship!" replied Miss Joe.

Again the minute gun wailed across the waters.

"And, oh!" exclaimed Alice, wringing her hands, "if there is one thing worse than imminent danger or death to one's own, it is to be in perfect safety and to hear, near by, the cry of others in extremity, and to be unable to give them aid!"

Once more the minute gun wailed across the waters. It seemed the voice of a last appeal.

"My God, I can scarcely stand this!" exclaimed Alice, shuddering, cowering, stopping her ears, while Miss Joe walked about, groaning, groaning, groaning!

But once more the minute gun wailed across the waters. It seemed the voice of a last reproach.

The two women and the old negro could do absolutely nothing to help the dying ship. They felt their own safety as a shame, and covered their heads to shut out the sound of death. They need not have done so.

The minute gun wailed no more across the waters. The voice was silenced for ever!

"Oh, my God! my God! she is gone down! she is gone down!" screamed Miss Joe, wrought up to an agony of terror and grief beyond all self-control.

The dread silence that followed was more insufferable than the terrific storm in its utmost fury had been—than the awful voice of the minute gun, in its vain appeal, had been! It was long after midnight now. Miss Joe, unable longer to bear the awful pause of fate, went and pulled open the door and looked out.

The wind had lulled, the rain had ceased, the waves had gone down, the storm was nearly over. Yet in the deep darkness she could only guess the wild ruin that had been wrought around. The sky hung over the waters black as a pall, yet by the phosphoric light of the sea that still moved and sparkled she discovered a dark object, like the hulk of a huge vessel, disappear under the waves.

And, hush! What sound is that, low and distinct, in the deep silence of the awful night? The sound of approaching footsteps and voices hurrying on, and now very near.

"Light another candle, for God's sake! some people are coming. God send it may be Hugh and his men! Light another candle, quick! and thrust it into a lantern!" exclaimed Miss Joe, hastening into the house.

And before the light of the other candle blazed, the room was filled with sailors, storm-beaten, dripping wet, two of the foremost of whom bore the body of a fainting woman in their arms.

It was Agnes.

"Where is Hugh—where is your captain? My God! where is Hugh?" exclaimed Miss Joe, as her eyes

roamed over this wild party in the vain quest of her nephew.

"We left the captain on the deck of his vessel. He refused to leave it while a man remained on board. We are going back for him, and half a dozen others," said the mate, looking about in haste for a place to lay Agnes; then, putting her in the arms of old Dodgy, he turned, with three others of the men, and left the house for the beach.

"Too late! too late! I saw the ship go down myself!" exclaimed Miss Joe, beside herself with grief.

"What must I do with this here young 'oman, Miss Ally?" inquired Diogenes of his mistress.

"Take her upstairs, Diogenes, and I will go up and attend to her," said Alice. And leaving Miss Joe and the shipwrecked sailors below, Alice followed the old negro with his burden upstairs.

But there a scene of ruin met her startled gaze. The roof had been reft from the house in the storm; the rain had poured through the ceiling of the loft and drenched the bed-chambers. One of the beds, however, being in a more protected angle of the room, was comparatively dry. This Alice turned over, and upon this the old negro was directed to lay his insensible burden.

While Alice was rubbing and chafing the cold, cold hands and feet of the shipwrecked girl, a loud cry of despair came up from below.

She hastened downstairs to know the cause.

The mate had returned from a fruitless errand. The *Belle Agnes* had gone down with all left on board, and among them the brave and generous Captain Hugh Hutton!

. . . . . .

Within the next three dreadful hours, "in night and storm and darkness," a man-child was born—son of the storm and the wreck—heir of a desert and a ruin!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DESOLATE HOUSE.

Alas! It desolately stands
Without a roof, the gates fallen from their band,
The casements all broke down, no chimney left!
—*Allan Ramsay.*

THE sun rose next morning upon a scene of ruin that defies description.

The house was almost a wreck. The roof, the chimneys, and the shutters of the upper story were gone. The windows were shattered and driven in.

The grounds also were literally laid waste. All traces of field, and garden, and flower yard were washed away. Trees were torn up by the roots, fences were leveled, outbuildings blown down, and all swept away by the flood. Cattle and poultry were drowned, and their bodies carried off by the sea.

Yes! the isle was indeed a desert, and the house was a ruin, with the exception of the lower story, which, having been built of stronger material, and being less exposed to the violence of the wind, had remained entire.

If the scene without was wretched, the scene within was scarcely less so.

The shipwrecked sailors had gone down to the beach for the purpose of searching for the bodies of the drowned men, if, perchance, they might have been thrown up, and of hailing any boat that might pass within hail.

Agnes and her child had been removed from the open and exposed upper chamber to the lower one, which was more comfortable. Alice, forgetful of her own fears and cares, bestowed upon the unfortunate young woman the most affectionate attention. Miss Joe, broken-hearted and half crazy, yet still governed by her inveterate habits of order and industry, went about putting things to rights, groaning, wringing her hands, and getting break-

fast. Diogenes brought wood and water, and stood shivering and waiting orders without the door.

Very soon after sunrise General Garnet, with two of his servants, arrived from the mainland. The wild ruin that reigned around, the deep distress that prevailed within the house, arrested all speech of blame upon his lips. He kissed Alice, expressing his gratitude to Heaven that she was saved. He condoled with Miss Joe, said that he would send over workmen to repair the house, offered any other assistance in his power, and requested to know in what manner he could serve her. But Miss Joe shook her head dolefully, said that she had always lived without alms, and that she could not receive any now; that she had not very long to live, but hoped she should not die a pauper.

After breakfast General Garnet took Alice home.

For many days nothing was talked of but the storm and the wreck. And every day brought in news of some disaster that had been wrought by the tempest.

. . . . . .

One day, as Alice sat sewing in her room, General Garnet entered with a cloud upon his brow, and the newly arrived Norfolk *Signal* in his hand. To his wife's startled look and anxious question, he answered:

"A heavy misfortune has befallen our neighbor Hardcastle. His son Lionel was lost in the storm of the 28th."

"Oh, Heaven!"

"Yes, fearful as the wind was here, it was even more terrific farther down the coast. The *Falcon*, homeward bound, was about entering Hampton Roads when overtaken by that horrible and disastrous tempest. The *Falcon* suffered frightfully. In the midst of the storm several of the crew and one of the midshipmen were washed overboard. Here is the full account in the leading column of the *Signal*. Read it. I must go over and see poor Hardcastle. By the way, Alice, this makes a very great change in the prospects of your young friend, Magnus. Hardcastle had no other child but Lionel, and has no near relation but his nephew Magnus, has he?"

"No," said Alice, looking surprised at such a question at such a time.

"Hum-m-me! then, indeed, this 'ill wind' has blown a great inheritance to Magnus. I suppose that after his uncle has somewhat recovered the shock of his bereavement he will recall Magnus. He will scarcely permit him to pursue the study of medicine now."

"I think that Magnus will prefer the study of some profession. I am sure that he wishes to live an earnest and useful life."

"Well, I do not know a more earnest purpose, or a more useful life, than that lived through in the proper administration of a large estate. By the way, Alice, I hope you have not, with your usual indifference in all things and to all persons, neglected to write to the poor boy during his banishment among total strangers in Baltimore?"

"I write to him every week."

"That is right; perfectly right. I am very glad to hear it. Apropos, Alice, were not Magnus and Elsie very great friends?"

"They were very much attached to each other," replied Alice, with her innocent eyes still dilating with wonder at these queries.

"'Very much attached to each other.' Hum-m-me! Mount Calm and Hemlock Hollow would form one very magnificent estate, joining as they do—about ten thousand acres, would they not be?"

"Yes," said Alice abstractedly.

"Yes, certainly, that is it. Let us see—how old is this youth?"

"About seventeen, I believe."

"Yes, and he will marry very early, if he can find a wife to suit him. He will settle very soon to serious, practical life. He is just the young man to do it. Alice, when he returns I hope you will not permit him quite to forget old friends. Stay—our Elsie is—twelve years of age?"

"Not quite."

"Well, nearly twelve—then thirteen, fourteen, fifteen,

sixteen—four years. Four years will quickly pass away; and our young gentleman can wait that long. At the end of four years I shall bring Elsie home from school. She will then be sixteen years of age. You were but a year older when you were married, Alice. Say, answer me—you were but seventeen when you were married, were you not?"

"I was but seventeen," replied Alice.

And here the conference ended.

General Garnet found Mr. Hardcastle in the extremity of grief. He had only received the dire intelligence of the loss of his only and well-beloved son, in a letter of condolence from the captain of the ship. He had nothing new, therefore, to learn from General Garnet, but thanked him for his visit and his sympathy. General Garnet remained with him all day and until a late hour of the night, when he took his leave.

Days, weeks elapsed, before Mr. Hardcastle found courage to summon Magnus to Hemlock Hollow, though in the meantime Magnus had written often, expressing his heartfelt sorrow and his earnest sympathy, and entreating permission to come home and see his uncle. At last Mr. Hardcastle wrote and recalled him. Magnus came and remained over Christmas. Then, his uncle being restored to his usual state of composure and cheerfulness, and being engaged in his customary occupations of agriculture and politics, hunting, fishing, and company, Magnus begged leave to return to his studies. His uncle opposed the proposition. What was the use of his studying a profession now? Could he not be contented to stay at home and keep a childless old man company?

But Magnus wished to be busy again.

"Well, could he not be busy enough overseeing the overseer, and keeping the plantation in order?" queried the old man testily.

But Magnus was very much in earnest, and persisted in his purpose. Finally, the old man angrily threatened to disown him, and let him go. And Magnus, preferring his profession to any inheritance, departed

But let the reader rest assured that the old gentleman had not the slightest intention of discarding the fine boy, whom he loved as a second son.

CHAPTER XIV.

VANISHING OF AGNES.

They sought her that night and they sought her next day,
They sought her in vain 'till a week passed away;
The highest, the lowest, the loneliest spot;
Her neighbors sought wildly, but found her not.
—*Mistletoe Bough.*

DAYS and weeks passed on, and brought Christmas, when an event occurred of so startling and inexplicable a nature as to fill the whole neighborhood with wonder.

Miss Joe's preparations for Christmas were all made, with the exception of the turkey and the materials for the plum-pudding. Miss Joe's turkeys had all been drowned in the great flood. Now, to have a roast turkey and a plum-pudding at Christmas was Miss Joe's eleventh commandment of the Lord and fortieth article of the Episcopal faith. So she took two pairs of men's woolen socks that she had just completed, donned her antiquated bonnet and shawl, and, taking Pontius Pilate as her negro body-servant, prepared to start for Huttontown to exchange her work with the village shopkeeper for raisins, currants, and spice, and money to purchase a turkey. Snow clouds were slowly condensing in the sky, but Miss Joe assured Agnes that she would be back long before it came on to snow.

And then, full of cheerful energy and anticipation, she set out.

Agnes remained in her usual apathetic mood, unheeding the flight of time, until the sudden rising of the wind and the sudden hustling of hail-stones against the windows told her that a furious storm was coming up. She arose and closed the window-shutters with some dif-

ficulty, and lighted a candle, when she found, to her surprise, that it was already seven o'clock. It was high time for Miss Joe to be at home. And now it occurred to the kind heart of Agnes that the good old lady, coming in from the storm, might relish a cup of hot tea. So she threw more wood upon the fire (Miss Joe's forethought had supplied her with a pile of wood by the chimney corner), and filled the teakettle and hung it over the blaze. But Agnes knew that if Miss Joe did not come almost immediately, if she had not already landed on the island, she would not come that night. Agnes set the table and made the tea.

An hour passed by and Miss Joe had not returned, and Agnes gave her up for the night.

At about midnight the storm abated, the clouds broke up, and a few stars looked shyly out as if reconnoitering the darkness. The night was very dark. Agnes, who felt lonely and nervous, and could not sleep, opened the window-shutters to look out, but could scarcely discern the line where the dark waters met the snow-covered beach. The sky hung like a black pall over the island. The deep darkness, the deep silence, the deep solitude oppressed her with gloom and fear. Her form was shrunk, and her eyes dilated by terror.

Suddenly, while she gazed, the whole scene was brightly illuminated. Several torches blazed along the beach, lighting up the whole line of coast, and revealing the forms of three boats already landed, and the figures of several men passing back and forth.

At the same instant that Agnes perceived them, she felt that she herself must have been seen in the strong glare of the lighted window at which she sat.

She started up with the wish to extinguish her candle, when she saw several of the men with torches approaching the house; and, overpowered with terror, she fell in a swoon.

. . . . . .

In the meantime Miss Joe had very reluctantly been detained at Huttontown by the utter impossibility of getting through the snowstorm to the isle. She had

passed the night with Mr. Fig's—the grocer's—family, bemoaning the necessity, and lamenting that "that poor young thing would feel so lonesome, staying by herself on the island all night."

Very "bright and early" the next morning Miss Joe, with a fine fat hen-turkey, living, and tied by the legs, and several packages of raisins, currants, and spices, entered her boat and set out on her return home.

When she reached the lodge the scene of confusion that met her eyes nearly transfixed her. Both doors, front and back, were wide open, and the air was rushing through the room. The fire had gone out; the great logs of wood had burned in two and fallen apart, and the charred and blackened ends were sticking up. The candle had expired in melted grease, which was now spread, cold, all over the candlestick, and down upon the nice white-oak table. The bed had not been slept in, for there it was perfectly smooth as Miss Joe had left it, with her own peculiar folds and twists about it. And there lay the baby in the cradle, screaming its little life away.

"In the name o' God A'mighty, Pont, what has been a-happening?" asked Miss Joe, lifting up the child, and sinking with it into a chair, pale as death.

Pontius Pilate stood there with the screeching and struggling turkey in one hand and the bundle of groceries in the other—looking like a statue of dismay carved in ebony.

"In the name of Heaven, Pont, what has been a-takin' place?" repeated Miss Joe.

"Gor A'mighty knows, mist'ess; but I does verily b'lieve how de Britishers is been landen' ag'in, or else Bonnypart. Chris' de Lor' be praised, ole mist', dat I an' you wa'nt home when dey come. See, now, how ebery ting turn out for de bes'. S'pose dat snowstorm hadn't a come up, where you an' I been? Good Lor'! poor Miss Aggy! Wonder what's come o' her?"

"Yes, what, my Lord! Pont," said Miss Joe, who never in any emergency was known to neglect the plain practical duty of the moment, "go and get the tinder-

box, and light a fire quickly, and heat some milk and water for this child. He is almost frozen and almost starved."

And Pontius Pilate put down his burdens and did as he was bid. And Miss Joe made the infant perfectly comfortable, and put him to sleep, before she joined Pont in his vain search around the island for Agnes, or some clew to her fate.

When she ascertained that Agnes was certainly not on the island, she dispatched Pontius Pilate to the mainland to rouse up the people of Huttontown to prosecute the search.

And the people were aroused indeed to a state of nine days' wonder.

What could have become of her? How could she have left her sea-girt isle without a boat? Would she have forsaken her child at all?

No; Miss Joe was certain she would not; she was too fond of him.

Had she possibly drowned herself?

No; Miss Joe was sure not; she was too much afraid of dying and leaving her babe.

Had she been carried off, then? and by whom?

Yes. It was finally concluded that she must have been carried off; but by whom? That was still the problem unsolved. Inquiries were made up and down the coast and in every direction. Advertisements were inserted in the papers, and large rewards offered for her discovery by General Garnet, Judge Wylie, and other benevolent neighbors. For to this sort of assistance Miss Joe made no objection. She considered the recovery of Agnes quite an affair of general interest, as indeed it was. Nothing, however, was heard of her.

As months passed, the mystery deepened, and people grew weary of conjecture.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ELFIN GIRL.

> But who is this? What thing of sea or land!
> Female of sex it seems.
>
> —*Samson Agonistes.*

For a time Miss Joe had grieved immoderately over the untimely and mysterious fate of her niece, and the loneliness of her own lot, and the prospect of a poor and solitary old age before her; but soon, in the native kindness and disinterestedness of her heart, she turned to the child thus thrown upon her exclusive protection, and only hoped that she might be spared long enough to raise him, and see him able to take his own part; for, after all, small and helpless, and abandoned as he was, he was the last Hutton of the Isles, and the heir of—the little sand bank in the bay, yclept St. Clara's Isle or Hutton's Isle.

Very strange was the lot and life of the lonely recluse of the sea-girt isle and her little protégé. Their only possessions were the nearly barren islet, the dilapidated lodge, a cow, a sheep or two, a little poultry and a dog. No cart or horse had they, nor even any use for either. The small skiff conveyed them to the mainland whenever, for the purpose of laying in a few groceries or dry goods, or of attending divine service, they found it necessary or agreeable to go. Their faithful old servant, Pontius Pilate, whose duty it was to till the land, row the boat, fish the weir, rake the oyster bed, and cut and bring wood from the mainland, was their only companion. The soil immediately around the house being mixed with clay and marl, still yielded, with careful cultivation, corn and wheat enough for the small consumption of the little family. And Pontius Pilate saved money by grinding this in a hand-mill. The little garden produced vegetables enough for their table. And the two sheep yielded wool enough for their winter socks and mits—carded, spun, and woven by the indefatigable fingers of

Miss Joe. And so time passed on, until Miss Joe, not having trouble enough on her hands already, was induced to assume the responsibility of rearing another child, a little wild elf-like girl, whose advent was almost as great a subject of gossiping speculation as the disappearance of Agnes had been. And the name of this elfin child was Garnet Seabright.

The history of Garnet Seabright, as it was understood in the neighborhood, was very briefly this:

When Hugh was about six years of age Miss Joe received a letter from a distant relation living in Calvert County, beseeching her, for the Redeemer's sake, to lose no time in hastening to the sickbed of the writer, who was most anxious to see her before she died.

Miss Joe had to rub her organ of eventuality before she could recognize in the writer a cousin, a wild young girl of exceeding beauty and willfulness, who had, years before, eloped with a soldier, a certain George Seabright, a distant relation of Captain Seabright.

Miss Joe never slighted any appeal to her benevolence. She shut up house, left the island in care of Pontius Pilate, took Hugh to Huttontown and left him in charge of Mrs. Fig, the grocer's wife, borrowed a mule, and set out for Calvert County.

The house of her cousin she heard upon inquiry was a miserably poor cottage, with scarcely any cleared ground around it, and situated in the midst of a deep, dark forest. It was approached for miles only by a narrow bridle path. It was near nightfall when Miss Joe entered this lonesome path; it was quite dark before she got near the house.

"Oh, good Lord! this is a great deal more lonesomer and more wilder than my sea-girt island they make such a fuss about; for there, at least, I could see an enemy a long ways off. But here! Lord, there might be an Injun, or a bandit, or more likely still, a runaway nigger, behind every tree. Get up, Jinny! Hark! Lord deliver us! what was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Highe! cheep! th-sh-sh-e-e-e-e!" laughed, screamed, chirped, chirruped a sharp,

shrill voice, high up in the trees, or somewhere between them and the blinking stars.

"Lord save us, what was that?" ejaculated Miss Joe, looking up at the branches overhead, in the direction of the eerie voice.

And there she saw, in the dark, bright starlight, in the highest branches of the trees, among the green and glistening leaves, a little elfin face, with glittering eyes, and gleaming teeth and streaming hair, mopping and mowing at her—chattering, gibing, laughing, and screaming at her.

"St. John and all the Holy Evangelists! St. Mary and all the Holy Virgins!—what's that? It's—it's—a fairy—it's—it's—a brownie!" exclaimed Miss Joe, bursting out into a profuse perspiration.

Miss Joe was neither cowardly nor superstitious, yet when the little elf, with its wild eyes and streaming hair, glided down the tree with the swiftness and celerity of a monkey down a mainmast, and leaped, with a yell of malice and delight, upon the mule, behind her, Miss Joe opened her throat with a prolonged shriek, that might have waked the dead.

And at the same time the mule dashed, plunging and kicking, forward.

The elf stuck its little hands into Miss Joe's fat sides, and, as the good lady herself afterward said, clung there like a craw-fish or a crab. The mule plunged madly on.

Miss Joe, delirious with terrors, real and imaginary, lost all power of controlling the animal, dropped the reins, and must have fallen off, had not the bit been seized by a strong hand, and the mule forced back upon her haunches.

"That's Godfather!" cried the elf, in human words and tones, and Miss Joe, looking up, recognized in her deliverer General Garnet.

The sprite leaped from the saddle to the bosom of General Garnet, and clung there in her crab-like fashion, her little head rubbed, rooted, under his chin, her little arms around his neck, and her little figure almost veiled by her long hair, screaming with her inarticulate tones of affection and delight.

Miss Joe dismounted from the now stationary mule, and began in an eager voice to pour forth her surprise, gratitude, and wonder.

General Garnet, with a look of vexation, tinged with amusement, tried to shake off his little encumbrance. But it was like trying to get rid of a chestnut burr; for if he succeeded in pulling her off from one place, she would stick at another, screaming with wild delight and elfish perversity, clinging to him, rooting her little head into him.

"Come, Netty! Come, come! this will not do; release me. Goodness, child, are your hands and feet furnished with claws?" exclaimed General Garnet, trying to tear off the little human bramble.

"Chip! Chip! Chee-ee-ee! H-sh-sh-sh! Whip!"

It is impossible to convey in words the saucy, defiant, chirping, inarticulate cry of the sprite, as it rammed its head again into the bosom of its victim. Presently the elf sprang away of itself, and perched upon the back of the mule.

"How is your mother, Netty?" then asked General Garnet.

"Waiting for you and the old woman, too. She sent me after you."

And now Miss Joe and the general looked at each other in astonishment, as if mutually inquiring, "You, too?"

General Garnet, putting his hand upon the shoulder of the elf, and giving her a slight shake, put her upon the ground, took her hand, and walked up to the dark forest path, drawing her after him.

Miss Joe took the bridle, and leading her mule, followed.

A little way up the path was a horse standing perfectly still, saddled and bridled, and with a portmanteau on the crupper.

General Garnet remounted this horse, and, taking the wood sprite before him, rode on up the path.

Miss Joe, not wishing to be left behind, tumbled up into her old saddle, and urged old Jenny to her best

speed. They soon came to a little clearing in the forest, and paused before the humble door of a log house. The elf sprang down from her seat, and, darting into the door, cried:

"They've come, Minny! Godfather and the old body, both."

"Poke up the fire, and let them both come in, Netty!" was the answer; and presently the sprite pulled open the door with a bang, and stood there with her glittering eyes and streaming hair and naked legs, to admit them.

They entered and found the room occupied by two persons; a young woman, who sat propped up in an armchair by the fire; and an old negress, who seemed to be her servant or nurse. The young woman bore a singular resemblance to the elf-like child; but her dark eyes were burning, and her face was bathed with the fatal fires of consumption. She held out an emaciated hand to welcome her visitors, while the old negress set rude stools for their accommodation. The young invalid, pressing the hand of Miss Joe, thanked her many times for her kindness in taking this journey, and begged her to sit down quite close to her, for that she could not raise her voice much. Miss Joe drew the stool to the side of the invalid and begged to be informed how she could serve her, expressing at the same time her perfect willingness to do so. Then the young woman, in a feeble voice, interrupted by frequent fits of coughing, said that she felt she had but little time to live,—that her days, nay, her very hours were numbered,—that after her death she wished Miss Joe to take charge of her orphan child; that General Garnet, who considered himself under great obligations to her late husband, would be at the costs of its rearing and education, and would, besides, liberally repay Miss Joe for the trouble she might be put to in taking care of it.

General Garnet was there to indorse her promises. He approached them; and taking the feverish hand of the invalid, and turning to Miss Joe, said:

"The husband of this young woman was a soldier under my command; he fought under me during the

whole course of the war. Once he saved me from death. Once he saved me from dishonor. He received his death-wound—for, years after, it caused his death—in the same battle in which I won my present military rank. I am under eternal obligations to him; and while I have an acre of ground, or a dollar at my banker's, I will never see this child want!"

The invalid died the next morning, immediately after being placed in her chair, where she had insisted upon sitting.

General Garnet arrived within an hour after, and took the direction of the humble funeral.

Within four days from this Miss Joe found herself at home with her grandnephew, little Hugh, her ward, Garnet Seabright, the old negress, who had fallen to little Garnet's possession, along with the personal effects of her mother, and, lastly, with old Pontius Pilate, who had complained of great loneliness during his mistress' absence.

Little Hugh Hutton was a proud and happy little man the day of Netty's arrival. He tried to multiply himself into a train of attendants to wait upon the little girl. He first proposed to give up his cot bed, his chair, and his little chest for her use. He brought her all his playthings, his bows and arrows, and guns and traps, and hammered all day at what he fondly supposed to be a boat, that he was making for her benefit.

When General Garnet had taken leave of Miss Joe at Huttontown, just as she was about to cross over to her island, he had begged her to apply to him in any emergency, and to call on him for anything her young charge might want. The child of the soldier who had served under him throughout the Revolutionary war, who had once interposed his body to save his life, should never suffer for the necessaries or comforts of existence while that life was spared. And this he had said with that earnest and fervent tone, and with that benign and beautiful smile that never failed to fascinate the love and trust of all who heard and saw him. And Miss Joe felt assured and comfortable.

But now, as days slid into weeks, and weeks grew into months, Miss Joe heard no more of General Garnet and his promises, nor did she like to take him at his word and apply to him. He ought to prevent that and save her feelings, she said.

As years passed away, however, Miss Joe occasionally wrote to General Garnet in behalf of her little protégée. For the most part, her letters would remain unanswered, but when one did elicit a reply, General Garnet's epistle would be full of kindness, blessing, encouragement, good advice, and—nothing else.

At last, during a bitter winter, their main dependence, their faithful servant, poor old Pontius Pilate, caught the pleurisy and died. In the midst of this trouble Miss Joe wrote again to General Garnet, and once more, and for the last time, invoked his promised assistance. After the lapse of several days she received a letter from the benignant general, full of condolence, sympathy, and exhortation to hope and patience, and—nothing else! The letter concluded with the assurance that she had nothing to fear—that God never made a mouth for which he had not also provided food. To this letter the long-suffering old lady was exasperated to reply—that though it was true God had made both the mouths and the food, yet the mouths had fallen to her lot, and the food to his.

The general never replied to this last letter, and here the correspondence ceased.

CHAPTER XVI.

ELSIE.

Oh! the words
Laugh on her lips; the motion of her smile
Showers beauty, as the air-caressed spray
The dews of morning.

—*Milman.*

But ever still,
As a sweet tone delighteth her, the smile
Goes melting into sadness, and the lash
Droops gently to her eye, as if she knew
Affection was too deep a thing for mirth.

—*Willis.*

GENERAL GARNET was certainly not a parsimonious man; perhaps his interest in his little godchild had died with her mother; perchance, being a very wealthy man, he could not appreciate the strait to which poor Miss Joe and her little family were reduced; possibly, he did not wish to give his personal attention to little Garnet's necessities; probably, he intended that Miss Joe should get what was needed at the village store, upon his account; certainly, if Miss Joe had liberally interpreted his letters, and done so, he would, without demur, have settled the bill. But Miss Joe was far too cautious to put a doubtful construction on his letters, and run in debt. I never clearly comprehended the difficulty between them, but I believe they each misunderstood the other, and so General Garnet remained with the stigma of cruelty and ingratitude resting upon him, when, perhaps, he could be justly accused of indifference only.

Just about the time of Miss Joe's last application also, General Garnet, like Martha, was troubled with many things. He was a candidate for the Senate, and all his thoughts engaged in the secret, intriguing, vexatious, multifarious business of electioneering; or if he had a thought or a moment to spare, it was divided between the negotiation with his neighbor, Mr. Hardcastle, of a

marriage between Magnus Hardcastle and Elsie Garnet, or in preparations for the return of his daughter—having his house repapered, repainted, and newly furnished.

Magnus Hardcastle had obtained his diploma, and was getting into some little practice, despite the grumbling, growling, and swearing objections of his uncle, who could see no necessity for his nephew "making a slave of himself for nothing."

Yes, absolutely for nothing! Let Magnus show a dollar that he had ever earned by all his practicing of medicine. Let him show even a dollar that he had ever got back for the medicines that he had dispensed along with his attention and advice!

It was true, Magnus' receipt-book, if he owned one, was an unwritten volume. His practice was mostly among poor people, who had no dollars to spare.

Well, then, what did he do it for? What good did it do him? There he was, rapped up out of his warm bed in the middle of the winter's night, in the midst of a snowstorm, to ride five or six miles to some old woman in a cramp colic, or some child with the croup! What good did it do? And this was not the case once or twice, but five or six times in a month. And what good did it do him?

Lives were saved!

Yes, but what did he get for his trouble? Thanks, maybe. Pooh! he knew very well that half the time he got nothing but ingratitude and coarse abuse. He had better remember that Irishwoman, with an inflammatory fever, who took her powders every hour in a gill of whisky, and, being near death, swore the d—— doctor's stuff had murdered her. He had better remember how the other woman cursed him for cutting off her husband's mortified leg to the saving of his life. Pooh! Let him give up the dirty profession. He did not adopt him, did not intend to give him a fortune for the sole purpose of enabling him to be a poor doctor without even parish pay!

Sometimes Magnus would answer to this effect:

"Nonsense, my good uncle! If I can do any good in my day and generation, let me do it. Though I do sometimes get abuse from some poor, ignorant man, or, more frequently, a blowing up from some poor, nervous, overtasked woman, who, by the way, would defend me, to the death, the very next hour, if anyone else attacked me—why should I care? I am quite as well liked as I deserve to be. Most people are, in fact. Some day the people around here will send me to Congress in my own despite, I am so popular."

"Send you to Congress! I expected that—I was only waiting for that. It only wanted that to complete my despair and your ruin."

"Dear uncle, be easy—I shan't go," Magnus would reply, laughing.

Yes, Dr. Magnus Hardcastle was very popular, and could have carried as many votes as any man in the county. He was the constant companion of General Garnet, by what sort of attraction and association the reader cannot fail to know. Never was such a zealous partisan as Magnus! Never was such a stump orator,—earnest, eloquent, impassioned, large-souled, great-hearted, full of human sympathies,—he could sway a crowd to and fro in a manner that might have been amusing, if it had not been sublime in its exhibition of power. It was his personal appearance, as well as his temperament, that was the cause of much of this power over others.

But it is time to give you some idea of Magnus Hardcastle at twenty-three. He was a fine illustration of the beauty of the vital system. He had the tall, athletic form that distinguishes the men of the Western Shore; a face rather square, by reason of the massive forehead and massive jaws, both indicating intellect and strength; but it was in the fullness of the beautifully rounded chin and cheeks, in the fullness of the large, but beautifully curved lips, that the fine, genial serenity, and joyous temperament was revealed; the line of the nose and forehead was nearly straight, and the eyes were clear blue, the complexion was clear and ruddy; and the face was surrounded by the darkest chestnut hair, and whiskers

that met beneath the chin. The prevailing expression of this fine countenance was confidence and cheerfulness.

Magnus had been corresponding with Elsie for the last three years, and looked forward to her return with more of joyful anticipation than anyone else in the world, perhaps, except her mother. A year before this, two miniature portraits of Elsie, in her young womanhood, had been forwarded from England. One of them had been retained by her mother; the other was presented by General Garnet to Magnus. He wore it in his—vest pocket. It was his charm, his talisman, his abracadabra. When, if ever, he would become, for the instant, lazy, stupid, hopeless, or impatient, he would take that miniature out, touch the spring so that the case would fly open, and gaze upon that handsome, wholesome, happy face until energy, inspiration, hope, and patience came again; and he would close it, and replace it in his pocket with a joyous faith in his coming life, that not all the powers of evil could have shaken.

I told you that Magnus was the zealous, active, and most efficient partisan of General Garnet; he was also the dear friend and confidant of Mrs. Garnet. Many and long were the confidential talks they would have in Alice's dressing room; and the subject of these conversations was Elsie—still Elsie.

One day, after reading with Mrs. Garnet Elsie's last delightful letter, and discussing with her Elsie's expected arrival, he exclaimed joyfully: "This makes me gladdest of all!—that our fresh, dewy, charming Elsie will come at once to us. Well!—at once to me—that she will not have had, as most young ladies have, many other lovers; that the sun of the world will not have stolen the bloom and the dew from our beautiful Maryland rose."

But Magnus "reckoned" his future without destiny, his "host."

Elsie had been withdrawn from school, indeed, and was quite ready and anxious to get home. She was to return with General A——'s family, who were soon expected to sail for the United States. But one circum-

stance following another, and connected with his diplomatic business, had deferred his departure from time to time, until six months passed away—during which time Miss Garnet had been presented at court, and was moving in the best society in London. Yes; and, though still impatient to come home, enjoying her happy self to the utmost, as every letter testified.

Now, you would think that after having congratulated himself so upon the unsunned freshness of this beautiful Maryland rose, that Magnus would lament that she was blooming in the very blaze of the sun of fashion, in the very conservatory of a court.

By no means; her letters reassured him, every one.

"It is well, very well, upon the whole," he said. "She has now an opportunity of forming an acquaintance with one order of society that may never occur again—of getting an insight into one phase of human nature that nothing but this experience could afford her."

And time sped on, and brought the day when a letter came to them, dated at Liverpool, and announcing that General A——, with his family, and Miss Garnet, would sail within a few days, in the ship *Amphytrite*, bound from that port to Norfolk. Therefore, it was expected that within a few days after, if not before the arrival of the letter, the *Amphytrite* would be in port.

General Garnet, accompanied by Dr. Hardcastle, left Mount Calm immediately for Norfolk, to welcome his daughter, if the ship had come; to wait for her if it had not.

Mrs. Garnet remained at home to receive her, in fond, impatient expectation.

She had Elsie's bed chamber decorated, and a fire made in it every day, and the parlors lighted and warmed, and the tea table set for the whole party every evening.

At last, one night,—a week after they had left home,—while she was standing before the parlor fire, trimming a lamp on the chimney-piece, and wondering sadly if she were not merely imagining that her long-lost daughter was expected home, a carriage drove rapidly up the

shaded avenue, steps were let down, people came, a little bustle ensued, hasty steps and joyous voices were heard. Alice ran out, and, in an instant, the mother, weeping, laughing, exclaiming, had caught, and was hugging her daughter laughing to her bosom. Yes, Elsie herself!—Elsie, warm, alive, real, and such an armful of bright, rosy, joyous life, and love and reality! I leave you to imagine the joy of the party around the tea-table that night, where all were too joyful to eat—or the late hour at which they separated for the night and retired to their several rooms, where each one was too happy to sleep.

The next morning, happy, joyous Elsie had to hold a sort of levee for the benefit of the colored folks. Every negro in the house, or on the plantation, who had known her before she went away, had to come and shake hands with her, and welcome her back. And every little one that had grown from infancy to childhood during her absence, and to whom she was a sort of fabulous demi-goddess, or, it might be, one of the angels, had to come and stare at her and be patted on the head, and get its paper of sugar-plums or its toy.

And then, later in the day, when her trunks and boxes arrived in the wagon, and were unpacked, she had to distribute her presents and tokens of remembrance to all and each of the colored people.

And in the course of the second day, when the news of her arrival began to be rumored about, the companions of her childhood, now grown up to be young men and women, flocked in to see her. And it was from their sly hints and inunendoes that Elsie was taught that it was expected of her father to give a ball, and that, indeed, a great many people would be very greatly disappointed if he did not. And good-natured Elsie, in order to make so many young folks happy, named the matter to her father, and begged him, as a personal favor to herself, in consideration of her recent arrival home, to give a party. So General Garnet, willing to please his child, and believing, besides, that a large party might forward his electioneering prospects, gave his consent. He consulted Mrs. Garnet and Dr. Hardcastle, and fixed

the time of the ball for that day two weeks. Magnus was with Elsie every day. She perfectly understood, though she could scarcely have told why, for no one had as yet hinted the subject to her, that she was at no very distant period of time to be married to Magnus. She considered her marriage, like her leaving school, her presentation at court, and her coming-out ball, a part of the programme of her happy drama of life, and was content. She loved Magnus. During her absence in England, she had remembered and loved him as she had remembered and loved her father and mother—as one of the elements of her life's joy.

When she returned, she had met him with the fond and free affection of a sister for an only brother.

And when she had been at home a week, and Magnus had found opportunity and courage, and led the beautiful and happy girl to a shady nook in the twilight parlor, and told her with the burning eloquence of passion how long, how deeply, how greatly he had loved her; how she had been at once his one memory and his one hope—his incentive, his dream, his inspiration, his guiding star, Elsie heard him with undisguised astonishment at his earnestness and enthusiasm, and wondered to herself where it all came from. And when he, full of doubt and fear, for her free and unembarrassed manner discouraged him, begged her to give him answer, she replied, without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment—nay, even in her native, gladsome, confident manner—that he need not have given himself so much anxiety; that of course everybody knew they were going to be married; didn't their lands join? and, of course, she had never even thought of retreating.

Now you may think from that speech that Elsie was a sadly heartless and mercenary and calculating little baggage. She was as far as possible from being that. She was a fresh, innocent, totally inexperienced girl, who repeated, parrot-like, the sentiments of those around her.

Magnus knew that, and caught her, strained her to his bosom, pressed kisses on her brow, her cheeks, her lips,

in the delirious joy of "first and passionate love." And Elsie broke from his arms and ran from the room suffused with blushes, trembling with a strange, painful, blissful tumult. All that evening Elsie wandered about upstairs, or sat dreaming, half in terror, half in joy, until her mother came in and asked of what she was thinking so deeply?

Elsie started, and blushed violently.

Alice took both her hands and gazed deeply into her face.

At that earnest and tender mother's gaze, the tears sprung into Elsie's eyes, and then, as struck by something ludicrous in herself or her position, Elsie laughed.

Alice pressed her hands, and released them, saying:

"It is time to dress, my dear Elsie, your father expects you in the parlor. Let me fix your hair; it is in sad disorder." And she smoothed and twined the rich ringlets around her fingers, letting them drop in long tendrils of golden auburn.

And then she arranged her dress of purple cashmere, and they went below to the lighted parlor, where General Garnet and Magnus awaited them. The general and Magnus were engaged in a political discussion, but Magnus broke off and came at once to meet them.

Elsie, with a bright blush, turned away and walked to a distant table, where she ensconced herself with her tambour frame.

But from that day Elsie gradually changed. She kept out of the way of Magnus most sedulously. The courtship became a regular hunt. All Magnus' ingenuity was employed in devising how he could circumvent Elsie's arch and saucy prudery, and entrap her into a little lover's talk or walk. And all Elsie's tact was engaged in devising means to avoid without offending Magnus.

And so days went on, until one day it fell like ice upon the warm heart of Magnus, that Elsie might not love him except as a brother; and oh! he thought of her first, free, fond, sisterly affection for him, until the evening upon which he first declared his passion, and then of her calm agreement to marry him because their lands joined, and

her cold avoidance of him ever since. "Yes," he said to himself, "it is too true. Elsie does not love me. I am wooing an unwilling bride. Shall I continue to do so? Shall I marry her and seal her misery? No, my God! No, though she is the first and last hope of my life, I will resign her if that will make her happy." And so Magnus suddenly abandoned the pursuit of Elsie, and grew thoughtful, sorrowful, pale, and weary-looking.

Then he absented himself from Mont Calm for several days. Elsie did not grow pale or thin; she was too sanguine for that; but she became uneasy, then anxious, then restless, and would walk about looking silently from the windows, particularly the back windows that overlooked the forest road leading down to the Hollow; or looking into her father's or her mother's face with an anxious, appealing look of silent inquiry. If the door-bell were rung, she would start violently, pause breathlessly, turn very pale, ask eagerly of the servant who returned, "who was that?" The answer, "Judge Jacky Wylie," or "Marse Roebuck" caused her to sink back in her seat, disappointed and blushing with mortification. And yet only two or three days had passed; but then Magnus had been in the habit of coming twice a day, and staying over night; and two or three days seems to a young, impatient heart like two or three eternities.

At last General Garnet, in the blackest rage and the brightest smile, put a pair of pistols in his pocket, mounted his magnificent black war-horse Death, and rode down to Hemlock Hollow, with the deliberate intention of courteously inquiring into Dr. Hardcastle's motives of conduct, and blowing his brains out if the answer should not prove satisfactory. Not that he sympathized with Elsie, or believed in broken hearts, but that he had a saving faith in the junction of estates, and a high respect for the "honor of his house."

He found Magnus looking sallow and haggard, and immediately surmised that he had been ill, reproached him in a polite, gentlemanly way for not having informed his friends of his indisposition, and finally hoped that he had recovered.

Magnus pleaded guilty to illness, and much care and anxiety, and spoke of the pain that enforced absence from Elsie gave him. Not for the world would Magnus have hinted that Elsie's coldness had driven him away, and that despair had made him ill; he knew too well that such a communication would be visited with great severity by her father upon the head of Elsie. And he judged rightly—General Garnet's heart was set on the marriage of those two joining plantations. If Magnus had backed out, he would have shot him like a dog. If Elsie had retreated, he would have turned her out of doors. If both had broken off, by mutual consent, he would have—Satan only knows what he would not have done.

As it was now, he was perfectly satisfied with Magnus, insisted that he should come over the day of the ball, if not before, received his promise to do so, and took leave.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BALL—THE UNEXPECTED GUEST.

There was a sound of revelry by night.
. . . . . and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily, and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes that spoke again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell!
But hush! hark!

—*Byron.*

THE day of the ball arrived. People had been invited for twenty miles around. Apartments had been prepared for the guests who, coming from a distance, would be likely to remain all night. From an early hour in the afternoon carriages began to arrive, and the men-servants had enough to do in stabling the horses and putting away the vehicles; while the maid-servants were employed in showing the company to their dressing rooms, and attending upon them there.

Magnus came early in the afternoon, in order to have a private conversation with Mrs. Garnet, to whom he intended to open his heart fully.

He asked for her as soon as he arrived, and was immediately shown up into her bed chamber, into which both Alice and her daughter had been crowded by the incoming of their guests. As he entered, Alice came forward with a smile to meet him. Elsie started violently, colored brightly, and, ere anyone could prevent her, even if they had wished, flew from the room.

As she flew by him, Magnus fixed one passionate reproachful look upon her, and said, in a hurried voice:

"Fear nothing, Elsie! I will never trouble you."

Alice, still smiling, pointed him to a chair. He sat down, dropped his forehead upon his hands for a moment, sighed heavily, looked up, and opened his story. He told Alice that he had discovered, to his eternal sorrow, that Elsie did not love him, that though to resign her was like resigning his hope of heaven, yet every principle of justice and honor obliged him to do so; he concluded by asking her opinion as to the best manner of breaking this affair to General Garnet, so as to shield Elsie from his indignation.

"And so you wish to give Elsie up?"

"Wish!" and Magnus dropped his forehead into his palms with a groan that might have started all the house, had they been listening. Then, lifting his head up again, he said sternly, almost fiercely:

"Listen! If Elsie loved me, not all the power of earth or of hell—or—God forgive me!—I had nearly said of heaven—should sever her from me! not you—not her father—not herself—if only she loved me! But she does not, and it is all over."

"And who told you she did not love you?" inquired Alice, smiling at his vehemence, and sighing as her thoughts flew back to the past, when she was resigned in spite of herself. "Who told you that Elsie did not return your love?"

With a gesture of despair Magnus recounted all that had passed between himself and Elsie, and ended, as he

had begun, with a groan, dropping his head upon his hands.

> "Puir human bodies are sic' fules,
> Wi' a' their colleges and schules,
> That when nae real ills perplex 'em,
> They mak eno' themsel's to vex 'em,"

sang Alice; then said:

"Oh, Magnus! with all your knowledge—with your classic, and mathematic, and philosophic, and metaphysic learning—with all your knowledge, not to know a young girl's heart better than that! Oh, Magnus! 'with all your getting, get wisdom, get understanding.'"

"Alice, Cousin Alice! Do you mean to intimate what sometimes I have madly hoped—that I have been mistaken, that Elsie does——"

"That Elsie loves you a thousandfold more now, that she avoids you, than she did while she laughed, and talked, and romped with you. Oh, man! you should have found this out for yourself, and not have put me to the shame of betraying my child. And now, never let me hear another word of your self-sacrificing resignation of Elsie's hand, or I shall take you at your word, as she would do now, for I don't believe in it. I have more faith in the cruelest demonstrations of a downright, honest, sincere, human passion than in all the self-martyrizing resignation in the world!" said Alice, with a strange asperity, for her thoughts flew back again to the past. "Go, Magnus! You will find Elsie in the ball-room. Go, Magnus; I love you, or I never would have said all that I have said to you."

Magnus seized the hand of Alice, pressed it to his heart, to his lips, and darted from the room in search of his betrothed.

He found her in the large saloon, described in the beginning of this story as occupying the whole of the right-hand wing of the house. She was standing at a table, arranging a large bouquet in a marble vase. He stole softly up behind her, and, restraining the impetuous force of his emotions, passed his arm gently around her waist,

and drew her—so gently!—to his heart. And Elsie's head sank upon his shoulder. He raised her chin and kissed her—still so gently!—as fearing to startle her shy trust and again frighten her away. So gently, and trembling all over, for in his bosom he held a young tornado in check. At last she moved to withdraw herself from his arms; he pressed her once more to his bosom, printed one more kiss upon her lips, and let her go. So quiet and so silent was their reconciliation.

He stood there where she left him in a happy trance, until the company began to drop in one by one, and in couples, and trios, and in small parties.

And then he wandered on by himself. He strolled down the shaded avenue, and through the gate, and over the burnished hills, now brown with the sear wind of November, under the cold deep-blue starlit skies, wrapped in a blissful dream, until the sudden peal of music from the house awoke him.

He turned to retrace his steps, and now saw the whole south wing blazing with light, and the sprite-like figures of the dancers as they flitted by the illuminated windows. He hastened back, entered the house, hurried to the little room always kept sacred to his use, arranged his toilet, and went below.

He entered the ballroom, which was resplendent and joyous with light, and music, and gay and brilliant company. Magnus slowly made his way through the crowd in search of his ladylove, but nodding, smiling, shaking hands, according to the degree of his acquaintance with the individuals that made up the company.

Judge Jacky was there in great force—superb in a blue velvet coat, white satin vest, and smallclothes.

And Ambrosia Wylie was there, too. Miss Ambush, as the colored folk perverted her pretty name. Oh, well named both ways, for she had grown up the most alluring *ignis-fatuus* that ever drew men on an elf chase through brambles and quagmires.

She had already drawn General Garnet on to ask her to dance! General Garnet, the proud, the stern, the majestic, the unbendable, is actually bending over her with

his most seraphic smile, and a gaze that might melt all the icebergs in the Northern Ocean—and she has raised her languishing eyes, with the look of a gratified angel, and she has given her hand, and he, still shining upon her with that sunlike smile, is leading her to the head of the cotillion.

In the meantime, Magnus found his ladylove. She was sitting at the farthest extremity of the room, the center of a circle of sprightly young people, who were eagerly engaged in asking her questions concerning her residence abroad, London, the court, the king, etc., etc., and as eagerly listening to her replies. As Magnus gently broke through this circle, and approached her side, with a smile, her eyes fell and her color rose.

Her young friends, with a smile, a laugh, or an arch glance, dropped off, one by one, leaving the lovers alone.

And now Elsie's eyes were dropped to the ground, and her color mounted to her temples.

At the same moment a young gentleman came up and asked the pleasure of her hand in the next quadrille.

Elsie, with a start, and a sigh of relief, suffered him to lead her forth to the head of the cotillion.

I am sure Dr. Hardcastle was unconscious of the angry flush and fierce glance with which he followed the meanderings of the young couple through the mazes of the dance.

Not so Elsie. With many a swift, furtive glance she detected the angry passion of her lover's face, and felt self-reproach enough to bewilder her movements. Never had beautiful Elsie danced with less grace, and never had she been so glad when the set was over.

Her partner led her to a seat, distant from the one he had taken her from, took his seat by the side of her, and held her in conversation that made her more fidgety than before.

Poor Elsie was at length relieved by Judge Jacky, who, seeing her distress and embarrassment, came up, and taking my gentleman by the arm, and saying to him: "There is a very lovely woman who would not be averse

to dancing the next set with you; come, let me introduce you to her," marched him off to dance with a tall, thin young lady of sixty-five.

Dr. Hardcastle now left his position across the room, and, walking leisurely, came up to Elsie, and dropped slowly into the seat just vacated.

And at that very instant, as if to try his patience to the utmost, up came Ulysses Roebuck, and holding out his hand, in quite a confident way, informed Elsie that he intended to confer upon her the glory and the joy of being his partner in the next set.

Elsie glanced at Magnus, shook her head, and laughed lightly.

Ulysses persisted, affirming that indeed he was in earnest, and did not mean to humbug her; that he really had reserved the honor and the pleasure of his hand in the next cotillion for her, and her alone. That his uncle had selected a very charming partner for him, whom he had declined, in consideration of her.

Elsie laughed a little, and told him she feared "the honor and the pleasure" was only offered to her in order to pique Ambrosia.

Whereupon Roebuck began to vow and protest, but in the midst of his vociferous asseverations, he happened to spy Ambrosia sitting down, quite exhausted, quite alone, apparently quite disengaged, for the first time during the evening, and Ulysses suddenly sped off toward her, in order to secure her at once—for the dance?—no, for a good, rousing quarrel.

"Why did you not dance with Ulysses?" inquired Magnus of Elsie.

She threw a swift glance to his face, then dropped her eyes, and replied, in a low tone:

"I shall not dance again to-night."

"Why?" he asked, taking her hand, and seeming to study its deep beauty. "Why will you not dance again to-night?"

But she colored so deeply, and looked so distressed, that he desisted from questioning her.

At last Elsie of herself said, in a very low voice:

"Mother told me not to dance, unless it were to make up a set that could not otherwise be completed."

"But I do not understand why you should have been warned against your favorite amusement, Elsie?"

"Why, lest by filling up one place in the cotillion, I might keep some young lady from dancing," replied she. But then, as though spurning disingenuousness, she added: "But that was not the only reason I refused Ulysses." Then pausing, and making a great effort over herself, she added, in a very low and tremulous voice: "It was because you looked so annoyed while I was dancing with Mr. Brent."

The light of an unutterable joy shone on the face of Magnus. He caught her hand with a strong, almost crushing clasp—his bosom heaved—his eyes kindled and smoldered. He stooped his lips near Elsie's ear to whisper something, but her cheek blazed.

And just then a slight bustle at the other extremity of the room attracted their attention. Exclamations of astonishment, joy, and wonder were intermingled with many words of cordial greeting, and of hearty welcoming. Above all noises were heard the jocund tones of old Mr. Hardcastle. The bustle widened in the crowd, like eddies in the water where a stone had just been cast, and the crowd seemed to be swayed toward the place where our lovers sat. The center of this crowd was a young man of rather effeminate, but exceeding personal beauty, tall, and slightly, but elegantly proportioned, with Grecian features, a fair, roseate complexion, golden hair, and light, soft, hazel eyes. He was receiving, and gracefully and graciously acknowledging, the *devoirs* of all around him, who were also moving with him towards Magnus and Elsie. As he drew near, they both simultaneously exclaimed:

"My Cousin Lionel!"

"Lionel Hardcastle!"

And both eagerly started forward, holding out their hands, in joyful welcome, before even thinking of the miracle of his advent.

Lionel at first shook hands with Magnus, then, seem-

ing to yield to a sudden and irresistible impulse, folded him to his heart in a close brotherly embrace.

He then took Elsie's hand, bowed over it gracefully, raised it tenderly to his lips, when Elsie exclaimed:

"Oh, my dear old playmate, I am so glad! so glad! that you were not lost after all!" threw herself into his arms.

The youth's eye and cheek kindled with a hectic flush, as he pressed the innocent, affectionate girl for an instant to his bosom, and released her to turn and see Magnus grasp her arm with no very gentle hand, and lead her away. To the many eager questions of "When did you arrive?" "Where from?" "How did you escape?" "Where have you been all this time?" put to him by the astonished crowd as soon as they recovered sufficient strength, Lionel replied:

"To-morrow, to-morrow, I will tell you all about it."

"That you shan't! you shan't tell for a week. It is enough, good Heaven, to have you among us. No more questions shall be asked or answered for a week!" exclaimed Judge Wylie, in a magisterial tone, and the company understood that they had been wearying a fatigued traveler, and desisted.

It was late when the ball broke up. And Judge Jacky, who seemed possessed with a spirit of jollity, resolved to follow up this party by one of his own. Accordingly, that very night, he improvised the "time, place, and circumstance" of a ball, and availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the presence of so many of his familiar friends, to give out rather informal verbal invitations. When all the company had departed, a cloud remained upon the brow of General Garnet. He spoke coldly to Magnus, in reply to his "good-night," as the latter left the house. Alice looked deeply distressed. Elsie glanced from father to mother with a vague presentiment of impending evil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW-FOUND HEIR.

Ernest.—Which is the bridegroom?
Wilhelm.—Marry! the heir.
—*Newman.*

MAGNUS had returned home with his cousin. The next day the family from the Hollow dined at Mount Calm, by invitation. General Garnet was still cold and reserved to Magnus, but showed the most marked attention to Lionel. This at first surprised Dr. Hardcastle; but soon, with a haughty curl of the lip, he thought:

"I see how it is; fortune has changed. I have lost an inheritance."

After dinner Lionel told a tale of an Algerine cruiser, of a long captivity, of a hair-breadth escape, but left as vague an impression of reality upon the minds of his hearers as it leaves now upon the minds of my readers. They did not doubt his story, but they could not well connect the effeminate beauty of the man with any life of pirate-adventure and slavery hardships.

Elsie was saddened for the first time in her life, and she scarcely knew wherefore. During the short estrangement between herself and her lover she had been nervous, anxious, excitable; now she was depressed. She loved her mother very tenderly; she loved her father passionately; and Magnus she loved—oh, how shall I say?—with an infinite future reservation. But now she saw a cloud—she was too guileless to know wherefore—settle and deepen, dark, cold, and chill, between her lover and her father; and the happy, buoyant Elsie grew pensive and thoughtful. General Garnet, with all his coldness, was studiously polite; and Magnus was self-possessed and social.

As this day passed—as far as the relative positions of some of the parties were concerned—so passed the weeks, and brought the day upon which Judge Wylie's party was to be given.

There was a heavy cloud of thought and care upon the brow of General Garnet; and those who knew him well surmised that he was considering the best manner of transferring the hand of the heiress of Mount Calm from the poor doctor to the rich heir of Hemlock Hollow.

Magnus continued his visits, as usual, undisturbed by the freezing exterior of General Garnet.

Alice always received him with affection; and Elsie's manner to him was earnest, affectionate, deferential, as if she wished to make up for her father's coldness. She was no longer shy and diffident. It seemed as if the presentiment of some impending misfortune, which she felt rather than understood, had thrown down the barriers of her reserve, and that she could not do too much, in her sweet, feminine way, to assure Magnus of her unchangeable affection and unswerving truth. Her eyes waited on him, shyly, all day long, for her maiden pride was self-subdued, but not her maidenly delicacy. Elsie had no suspicion of what her father really meant until the morning of the day upon which Judge Wylie's ball was to be given. General Garnet called Elsie into his room, and having explained in his polite way—he was polite even to his child—that circumstances beyond all human calculation or control had rendered it expedient that a new adjustment of affairs should take place, and that she must no longer look upon Magnus Hardcastle in the light of a suitor for her hand, but must, on the contrary, prepare herself to think of, and accept, Lionel Hardcastle, to whom he had given permission to visit her—Elsie opened wide her eyes in undisguised astonishment, that her father, her revered father, should ask her to break her plighted faith; but without one atom of terror, and without an instant's hesitation, she answered:

"Why, father, being engaged to Magnus, with yours and mother's consent, I would no more forsake him now than if I were already his wedded wife."

"We shall see, Miss Garnet. I will give you time," replied the General, in his soft, but sarcastic, manner.

"Father," said Elsie, her cheek burning with shame

and indignation, "if I should give you to suppose that any lapse of time could alter my determination, I should be a coward or a hypocrite. Father, I would not have engaged myself without your consent and my mother's, for I should have felt that to be wrong; but having engaged myself with your consent and blessing, I will not break that engagement, come what may. I promised, with your approbation, to give my hand to Dr. Hardcastle on Thursday week, and Thursday week, father, I must do it. Dr. Hardcastle has lost an inheritance; an event which he rejoices in, since it gives his uncle back a dearly beloved and long-lost son. But he must not lose his wife, father; he shall not."

General Garnet stood like one thunderstruck. His wife had never ventured to oppose his will, except

"To plead, lament, and sue,"

to avert some cruel deed. His servants had ever trembled before him. His very neighbors and associates had fallen into the habit of yielding to his inflexible will; and here was a little girl of seventeen years of age, with positively her own notions of right and wrong, of faith and infidelity, of honor and dishonor—and telling him, with a high, unblanching cheek, and a clear, unfaltering voice, that she meant to abide by right, and eschew wrong! He turned pale with suppressed rage; his eyes gleamed with their sinister light; he clenched his fist, and made one step towards her, but retreated again, and dropped his hand. The polished "gentleman" asserted its supremacy of habit over the angry "man." It would not be *comme-il-faut* for "General Garnet" to give "Miss Garnet" a good drubbing with his fists; besides, there was a look of calm, healthful moral strength about the mere child that forcibly impressed him.

"Father, this thing came suddenly upon me, and surprised me out of my self-possession, and the respect that is due to you. I spoke hastily, and, I fear, irreverently. I earnestly repent it, and ask your pardon. Forgive me," said Elsie; and she approached, and would have

offered herself in his embrace; but General Garnet extended his hand, and waved her off.

"Do I understand you to say, Miss Garnet, that you repent your foolish decision? If so, I am sincerely rejoiced to hear it."

"No, sir. Always, father, and in all else, I will be your submissive child. But for this, sir, you, yourself, laid on me this other duty, which I cannot shake off. Forgive me."

General Garnet looked at her steadily, while gleamed that red light from his dark eyes, and slowly shook his head, as communing with himself. Then, turning suddenly, and muttering something that sounded very much like a threat to "break her will or break her heart," he left the room; and Elsie sank down in her chair, and leaning upon the windowsill, raised her eyes to heaven, "full of thought and prayer."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEVOTION OF LOVE.

Oh! sweeter far than wealth, than fame, than all,
Is first and passionate love; it stands alone.

—*Byron.*

THERE was a much larger, but not so select, a company invited by the genial, social Judge Jacky than that assembled by the proud and reserved General Garnet. And by "early candle light"—the country hour for assembling for a ball—the whole house—parlors, chambers, family rooms, and saloon—were crowded to overflowing. The dining room only was kept shut up, for there the two long tables were to be set for supper. The saloon, or "big room," as it is plainly called in old-fashioned country houses, was blazing with light and splendor, and pealing with music, and alive with young men and maidens in ball dresses, laughing, talking, wooing, flirting,

dancing. It was something like General Garnet's ball on a larger and somewhat coarser scale, it must be confessed, but then it was such a joyous, jubilant, exultant scene! The young folks laughed, and talked, and danced, and jested with so much gladness and freedom! And Judge Jacky moved about laughing, talking, joking, gallanting all the ugly old maids, making love to all the low-spirited old widows, flattering and complimenting all the plain girls, encouraging all shamefaced young gentlemen, and electrifying into jocund life all the "flat, stale, and unprofitable" folks in the joyous company.

But it is not with the gay and thoughtless of that merry throng that we have to do, but with our great-hearted Magnus and our dear Elsie. You know at this moment, just as well as I do, that they both had too much on their minds to think of dancing. They had each come to the ball chiefly to meet the other and have a talk. General Garnet would willingly have kept Elsie away, but he did not think it polite to offend Judge Wylie by doing so. But one thing he had taken care to do—to send for Lionel Hardcastle to escort her there. And Lionel had ridden in the carriage alone with Elsie from Mount Calm to Point Pleasant, and had had every opportunity of pursuing a courtship that he had commenced almost from the first evening of his return. Elsie cut him short in the midst of one of his finest speeches by telling him that he was making love to his cousin's wife —or to one who would be so on Thursday week! Yes, Elsie compelled herself to say exactly that to Lionel, to crush his hopes at once. On reaching the house at Point Pleasant, Elsie said aloud to Magnus, who came out to meet them:

"Dr. Hardcastle, help me to thank your cousin for the kind manner in which he has supplied your place in attending me here," and, bowing courteously to Lionel, she took the arm of Magnus and entered the saloon.

They were now seated at the farthest extremity of the vast saloon, within the bay window. Elsie was looking very beautiful this evening. She was dressed in a gossamer white crape, over white satin. Her snowy arms

and neck were bare, and encircled by diamond bracelets and necklace. She was always beautiful, but now her usually happy, joyous face was softened and deepened into an expression of serious thought and feeling ineffably charming.

They had been conversing. Elsie had told him all that had passed between herself and her father. And Magnus had recounted a similar scene that had taken place between himself and General Garnet. He had, as Elsie had, asserted his determination to abide by their betrothal. He repeated the same thing to Elsie now. It was this—this saving of her heart's fondest hopes amid the crash of fortune—that made Elsie feel and look so very blessed.

They were still conversing. He raised her hand—she had an exquisitely beautiful hand, elegantly shaped, and white as snow, and now diamond rings sparkled upon it; appropriate ornaments for it, as one may see. Well, he raised that small, white, jeweled hand, and looking tenderly, half-remorsefully upon it, said—and his voice was full-toned and melodious with love and sorrow:

"This tiny, snow-white hand, sparkling with diamonds—this fresh, pure, delicate thing!—a jewel itself!—how can it be put to the uses to which my wife's hand must be put, Elsie?"

She looked at him with passionate devotion, saying:

"Take the jewels off and cast them from thee, Magnus—do!"

"And this slender wrist—you have such a beautiful arm, Elsie! What a round, full, graceful curve from the elbow to the forearm, and how elegantly it tapers off to the slender wrist! Ah! this arm, so pure and fresh, so well decked with this sparkling diamond bracelet—like icicles upon snow! How will it support labor?"

"The bracelet offends you, too? It was my father's birthday gift; but I like it no longer—it offends you. Take it off and cast it from you. Press your thumb and finger around my arm instead. Press it tightly, so that you will leave a ring there. It will be a red bracelet—or even a black one; so that when I can no longer see you,

I may close my eyes, and, feeling the impress of your fingers, cheat my heart with the fancy that you still grasp my wrist with a sweet violence. It will be another dearer bracelet that I will wear in remembrance of you. Oh, don't you know I understand now the enthusiasm of the saints?"

"Dearest Elsie, let us go forth from here. The light, the glare, the crowd, the noise here is insufferable. Let us go forth in the fresh air under the light of the holy stars. Come, love! My heart hungers, faints, to press you to itself. Come, love!" And opening a leaf of the bay window, he led her forth. It was a mild, clear, beautiful starlight night for the season, yet the air was chill, and Elsie was lightly clad. He looked at her and glanced around. The lighted window of a sitting room in the angle of the building showed that apartment to be vacant. He led her there. It was one of those small, conical wainscoted parlors so common in old houses. A fine fire was burning in the chimney, and a little old-fashioned green settee drawn up on one side of the fireplace. The room had an air of delightful snugness, comfort, and repose. He led her to this sofa and seated himself beside her, opened his arms, and whispered: "Come to my bosom, my own soul's love!" and folded her closely there. "Elsie, my pure, fresh, delicate, elegant Elsie, can you go with me indeed to share my lot of poverty and struggle? Oh, Elsie! if you do, will you never repent? Oh, Elsie! do you know what poverty is? Born and brought up in luxury and wealth, do you know what poverty is? Oh, Elsie, my little idealist, there is no poetry in poverty. Oh, Elsie, my little epicurienne, every sense is shocked and tortured in poverty. You see unsightly things, you hear discordant sounds, you come in contact with roughness, you partake of coarse food; oh, Elsie! ideality is wounded and saddened, sense is shocked, and love itself, perhaps, revolted!"

"Never! oh, never!" she said fervently.

"Oh, Elsie! my bright, beautiful Elsie! my delicate, elegant Elsie! I am worse than an executioner to marry you. I feel it, and yet I shall do it. God knows that I

will have you, and let the future take care of itself!" he said, pressing her strongly to his bosom.

"Yes, have me, have me; let me be always with you. It will be bliss ineffable. I should die if you were to leave me. My heart would consume itself in its own fires. I do not care for wealth, or rank, or distinction, or for ease or luxury. I only care for the wealth and luxury of your affection, and your constant society. I do not fear to have 'ideality wounded and saddened.' No, for the soul creates its own poetry. I do not fear to have every sense shocked. I do not fear to live amid unsightly objects and discordant sounds, and rough contacts; oh, no, for the soul creates its own heaven of beauty and harmony. I do not fear to have love revolted. Oh! no, no, no! I only fear a separation from you. My whole being trembling, tends toward you—so strong, as it would lose itself in you. Shut out the world, shut out light and sound, only let me feel your arms around me, pressing my bosom to your heart as now. All my life is compressed within my heart, and it is bursting to meet yours. I am blind, deaf, dead to all but you. I have scarcely self enough to say 'I have no self.' I love myself in you. Oh, my greater self! my larger life!"

So the softly flushed and moist cheeks, the heavy, liquid eyes, and the palpitating bosom said, but no word escaped the parted and glowing lips. Nor could a word have escaped between the kisses that were pressed upon them. Then he released her, and they sat upon the old-fashioned sofa by the glowing hickory fire in the old wainscoted parlor, and, hand in hand, talked. Oh, how they talked! Sometimes with profound earnestness, sometimes with light and bantering gayety.

"Yet you have had many admirers, Elsie," said Magnus.

"Have I?" she asked.

"Oh, Elsie, you know that you have."

"I try not to know it."

"Why, dearest?"

"Because I wish I was an Eastern bride for you. Oh,

yes! I wish that I had been reared in conventual seclusion, that no man's eye had seen me until my husband came to claim me; that, then, I could have gone apart from the world and seen only him. That would have been exquisite; that would have been blissful; for I do not want admiration; I want only your heart's approval! There would be such intense and concentrated joy in knowing only you. My joy would be diluted if my heart were divided among many."

"But your numerous admirers, dearest?"

"Oh, my numerous admirers! I did not finesse when I asked you if I really had any; for, in truth, my 'admirers' never came near enough to me to breathe their admiration."

"Why was that? How was that? Tell me."

"Look in my eyes, love, and read your answer there. Peruse my heart, love. It lies open to you as a book."

"Nay, tell me. I love to hear you talk. It delights me to listen to you. Tell me now. It is some sweet secret that will give me heaven to know. Come, love, be generous. Breathe the secret out upon my bosom," he whispered softly, and drew her again to his heart. "Come, love——"

"Yes, I will. I will repress this feeling of reluctance, and tell you all my thoughts. Yes, for surely I feel you have a right to have an answer to any question you ask me, my higher self. Listen, then. Bend low, for I shall whisper very low, lest the air around should hear me. When you first drew me on to love you, when leaf by leaf my heart unfolded and developed under the life-giving warmth of your eyes, of your touch, just as a rose buds and blossoms under the rays of its sovereign, the sun—my heart, I mean, or something rising within it—taught me many mysteries that neither prophet, priest, nor sage could have taught me. Among other things, it revealed to me the knowledge of all that would please and all that would displease you in myself, and impelled me to follow the first and eschew the last. It made me wish to isolate myself for you. It killed the very first germ of vanity in my heart, and made me wish that none

should come near enough to me to know whether I were beautiful or otherwise, far less so near as to tell me of it. It made me shrink from all those little gallantries from gentlemen which make up so large a portion of a belle's life. I was so afraid of being found unworthy of you when you should take me. I should not have felt good enough for you if my hand, that awaited your hand, had been squeezed and kissed, and my waist, that awaited the dear girdle of this arm—fold it closer around me now—had been pressed, and I, your expectant bride, had been twined and whirled about in the giddy waltz. But none of these things have happened to me. I come to you almost an Oriental bride for exclusiveness, and that makes me so happy. I should have else been unhappy, should else have been unworthy of you."

All this was murmured slowly, softly, dreamily, as though the truth stole out of a slumbering heart, while she lay upon his bosom, and the last words were breathed forth in an almost inaudible sigh. But he answered with passionate vehemence, clasping her to his heart:

"Unworthy of me! You! so beautiful! so good! so intellectual!—save when your highest intellect is whelmed in feeling!—yet, no—your highest intelligence—your spirit—is never so whelmed! You, the heiress of the haughtiest family in Maryland—and I—who am I?"

"My greater self! my life-giver!—by these titles only I know you. Does my rank and fortune offend you? Pluck me away from them; for I am yours. Bury me with yourself, in some lone forest cabin, in the wilderness, whither your footsteps tend; and there my hunter's wife will forget the world, while preparing the cabin for his return at eve. And she will not think the hours of his absence long, for they will be filled with fervent thoughts of him. Oh, that hunter's lodge in the wild! I see it even in my dreams!"

And this was not romance; but the passionate fanaticism of first, of early love.

"Oh, Elsie! how you talk!" he exclaimed, gazing on her eloquent face with wonder, reverence, and passion.

She blushed deeply, and bowed her crimson brow upon his bosom, murmuring:

"Do I? I am sorry. I suppose maidens do not talk so; do they?"

"I do not know how maidens do or should talk, any more than you do," answered Magnus, and then a singular expression passed over his countenance. He bent his gaze upon her, with a look of profound thought and searching inquiry, as though to read the depths of that heart she had so freely laid open to his perusal. And he said, very seriously: "I do not know how maidens talk, for I have spoken with but one maiden before of love." He paused and gazed down deeply into her eyes, as if to read her most hidden thought and feeling—possibly he expected to see some trace of jealousy there—he saw only the calm, profound repose of love, deep joy, and infinite trust. He resumed: "I never talked with but one maiden of love before; she was my first love." Again he looked down, and saw upon her beautiful face the same ineffable peace. He continued: "I loved her passionately. I lost her. It nearly maddened me." For the last time he gazed down upon her, as she lay quietly over his arm, with her face turned up to his, but her whole countenance radiated with a sort of calm, rapt ecstacy, as though she were then in the possession of all the bliss possible on earth. He gazed for a moment, full of astonishment, and then quietly asked: "Is it possible that this gives you no uneasiness, my love?"

"Does what?"

"The thought of my first love."

"No, dearest. Why should it?"

"'Why should it?' What a question. Why should it not?"

"I don't know, I am sure. When I do, I'll tell you."

"Yet," said Magnus thoughtfully, "though the idea of my having had a first love gives you no pain, you felicitated yourself and me very much upon the fact of your having had no other lover."

"Oh, that was a very different thing. Don't you feel that it was?"

"Yes; I feel it. But tell me now—think—why is it that the thought of my first love does not distress you?"

"Indeed, I do not know at all. I only know by the sure inspiration of my soul, and feel in every nerve of my body, that you love me; and I am so ineffably blessed."

"My darling Elsie!" he said, joyously kissing the lids down upon her two sweet eyes. "My darling Elsie, you are not selfish or jealous for yourself at all. I only wished to probe your heart a little. You were so jealous for me that I thought perhaps you might be so for yourself. You are not, my darling Elsie; my light of life! You are the only woman I ever loved! Yet, dearest, I told you no fiction. You, yourself, were 'the maiden to whom I spoke before of love.' But it was soon after you returned from school. You, yourself, were the maiden whom I lost,—for a little while, during our short misunderstanding,—and whose loss nearly maddened me. Oh, come! enter the heart of hearts, and live there forever!" He clasped her closer, and they subsided into silence, or conversed only with their eyes.

Long, long they remained in that still trance of joy, but at last Elsie withdrew herself, laughing, from his arms, sat down beside him, and they began to talk of their future home. He told her it would be indeed a cabin in the backwoods of Maryland; but not a hunter's cabin, as she fancifully supposed. Oh, no! but a country doctor's dwelling, in a new settlement. And that he would not return at eve in the hunter's picturesque costume, with a gun and a nine-antlered deer across his shoulders, but upon the back of a stout mule, with a country doctor's saddle-bags behind him. How would she like that?

"Oh, very well, dearest Magnus! for then you will be saving life instead of taking it. Oh, yes, I do like—I do love—your profession, Magnus. Since you must have one, I like it better than any other you could have chosen. I think physicians do more disinterested good than any other set of men on earth. I will not even except the preachers. Oh, yes! I do love your profession, dear

Magnus, and love you better, if possible, for being a poor country doctor. God love and bless you! When you shall have come home tired, from your long round—oh, you shall have sweet repose, love—indeed you shall! God bids me to assure you that you shall. Whatever our cabin home may be, I can make it a little haven of repose —a little heaven of bliss for you. Oh, indeed I do not fear; my whole full soul assures me that we shall be happy and victorious over fate. Let me kiss your eyes—you kissed mine just now, so sweetly. God bless those grand eyes! Oh, Magnus, can a cabin or a garb of homespun hide the light, the greatness that is in you? Oh, Magnus, I saw a king and several princes of the blood when I was presented at court by General Armstrong; but their foreheads were low and receding, their presence had the strut without the dignity of majesty. Oh, Magnus, their kingly crown could not have given either that magnificent forehead of yours. Oh, Magnus, there is something greater in you than any surrounding you can have. Do not any more dread that I shall be either pained or revolted at anything in the circumstances of our condition. The rough walls of a log cabin will not shock or sadden me."

"No, darling, for the rough walls of our log cabin, like the rough bark of an oak tree, has something really picturesque about it; but"—said he, in a half-sorrowful, half-comic way—"the pots and kettles, the mops and brooms!"

"What! the humble little household gods and goddesses that set up no pretension to worship, or even to honorable mention, and yet confer so much benefit? No, indeed. I have a kindly feeling for all such. Mine, if they can't be beautiful, shall be neat and pretty. Oh, don't you remember when we were children, and used to run in out of the snow to old Aunt Polly's kitchen, and how she'd press us in to help her every time she could? Oh, I know a great deal about cooking, and I always had a turn for housekeeping."

He arose, took her hand, and raised her up, and looked at her from head to foot, as she stood—that delicate,

beautiful girl, in her elegant ball dress of gossamer crape over white satin, diamonds sparkling on her arms and neck, as he had said, like icicles upon snow. He surveyed her, from her white rose-wreathed auburn hair to the tip of the white satin slipper. He clasped her hand, and looked at it.

"I know," she said, "what you are thinking of again —'Elsie must doff this dress, and this style of dress, for some years to come'; but do not fear, within ten years, and by the time that the beauty of your love has matured, Elsie will weave a more elegant dress than this, when her husband's talents shall have 'achieved greatness.' And this little hand that you look at so fondly, so sadly—'this pure, fresh, delicate thing, a jewel itself,' as you called it just now—under this soft, white cushion of flesh are nerves and sinews of steel. I am very strong, dear Magnus, very strong every way. And I can work; this hand shall toil and retain its beauty, because you prize it, too."

He clasped her again to his breast, and drew her white arms up around his neck. And then that notion of isolation came upon her again like a fond superstition, and she whispered:

"I do not want neighbors or friends where we live, love. I want only you. I want no one that can take me off from you. It is late. Shall I go?"

"Yes, dear love," she answered, untwining her arms from about his neck.

CHAPTER XX.

ELSIE IN THE ATTIC.

To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can either think nor read,
And these blue fingers will not hold
The pen—(this attic's freezing cold)—
I tell you, I pace up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I bear for him at least.

—*Browning.*

WHEN they re-entered the ballroom the revelry was still at its height. Six cotillions were on the floor.

Judge Jacky was flying about, now here and now there, now everywhere at once.

Ambrosia Wylie, in a gold-colored satin, that harmonized well with her warm-hued tone of beauty, sat in the bay window, the sunny center of a system of satellites.

General Garnet, who had got through with the political business that detained him at Huttontown, had just arrived, and was now standing apart, conversing with Lionel Hardcastle. He frowned darkly on seeing Elsie enter the room leaning on the arm of Magnus, and both looking so self-possessed, confident, and happy.

He smoothed his brow quickly, however, excused himself to Lionel, and advanced toward them. Bowing slightly to Magnus, he took the arm of Elsie, and saying that he wished to have a conversation with her, drew her off for a promenade.

In going off, Elsie turned, smiled on Magnus, and said:

"If I do not return in half an hour, Dr. Hardcastle, you must seek me out," and, bowing playfully, she went on.

"Was that done to insult me, Miss Garnet?"

"No, dearest father, it was done out of respect to Dr. Hardcastle; as you forgot to excuse yourself to him for

taking me off so abruptly, it would have been scarcely courteous in me to have left him without a word. We would not have treated a common acquaintance so, father."

"A common acquaintance! And pray what more is Dr. Hardcastle entitled henceforth to be considered?"

"As my husband, and as your son-in-law, father."

General Garnet turned pale, and spoke low, with suppressed rage:

"Your husband, and my son-in-law! I—would—see—him—and—you—in the lowest pit of h——l first!"

Elsie gave a violent start as this awful word struck her like a bullet. It was the more awful, that Elsie had never known her father to forget himself so far before. Violence shocked her, profanity revolted her; she was unaccustomed to either. Her father, even in his tyranny, was habitually polite. Her mother was ever gentle. Fury, threats, were strange to her; and now came this terrible burst of passion, the more terrible for its half suppression. She gazed at him in alarm. His face was white with anger, but it reminded her of the white ashes upon a burning coal. He continued in the same deep, stern tone:

"How dared you even receive that young man's attentions, after I have withdrawn my countenance of him?"

"Father, because his attentions were my right and his right. Who else, in your absence, could have attended me with so much propriety?" asked Elsie, trembling in her flesh, but firm in her spirit.

"Do not commit the impertinence of answering my question by asking another again, Miss Garnet. A question which, impertinent as it was, I will answer. 'Who,' you inquire, 'in my absence, could have attended you with so much propriety?' I reply, Mr. Lionel Hardcastle, the gentleman under whose protection I placed you for the evening."

"And who wickedly abused his position by addressing the words of love to one whom he knew to be Dr. Hardcastle's betrothed wife."

"Death! if you say that again," exclaimed General Garnet, trembling with fury.

"And whom," continued Elsie, frightened, but resolute, "I had therefore to dismiss as soon as I found Dr. Hardcastle."

He grasped her arm with a violence that might have crushed it. He set his teeth, and drew his breath hard. He could not shake or beat her there—not in that room full of company—among those hundreds of people. He could not even let them see the rage that was on the eve of explosion.

He looked around. Seeing Lionel Hardcastle at a short distance, he beckoned him to approach, and, without relinquishing his vise-like grip, said, in a deep, hurried tone:

"Do me the favor to call my carriage, sir, instantly, if you please."

Lionel opened his soft, bright eyes in a look of wide surprise, turned on Elsie a gaze of mingled admiration, sorrow, and deprecation, and, bowing to General Garnet, moved off to comply with his request.

General Garnet grasped Elsie's arm with a suppressed fierceness, and pulled her after him into the hall, thence out into the portico, and down the steps to the carriage door. Pushing her forcibly in, he jumped in after, pulled to the door, commanded the coachman to drive rapidly for Mount Calm, and was soon whirled away on the road to that place. He maintained a stern silence toward Elsie during the whole ride.

Arrived at Mount Calm, he sprang from the carriage, took Elsie out, drew her arm roughly within his own, and pulled her up the steps.

"Has your mistress retired?" was the first question he asked of the servant at the door. The man started at the fierce abruptness of his master's tone and manner, and replied hurriedly that she had.

"It is very well. Go wake up the housekeeper; ask her for the keys of the attic-room, and bring them to me yourself, with a night-lamp."

The man hurried away in dismay. And General Gar-

net remained there, still with his violent grasp upon Elsie's arm. When the servant returned with the bunch of keys and the light:

"Precede me upstairs, and on up into the attic," said General Garnet; and grasping Elsie more tightly, he fiercely hurried her on, till they reached the first floor, and the wide hall into which the family chambers opened.

"Father, this is my chamber door. I wish to retire," said Elsie, pointing to the door on her left. But her father hurried her past it.

The servant was now going up the attic steps, but paused to look down upon the scene.

"Father, what are you about to do?" asked Elsie, holding back. Her attire had been very much disordered by the violence with which she had been hurried in, her cloak and hood had fallen off below stairs; now her beautiful dress was tumbled, and her hair in wild disorder. "What are you going to do, father?" she asked again, drawing back.

But he turned upon her sharply, shook her furiously, as though he would have shaken the life from out her; and then seeing the horrified gaze of the servant standing on the stairs, he exclaimed, "Up into the attic, and wait for me there, instantly, sirrah. And consider yourself already sold to a trader, for your insolence in watching me!"

The appalled servant vanished up the steps, and the unmasked tyrant turned to Elsie, and tightening the grasp that he had never relinquished, dragged her to the foot of the attic stairs. Here the girl sank with all her weight upon him, upheld only by his hand.

"Up, up the stairs with you!" he exclaimed fiercely.

Elsie had too much physical strength to swoon, and too much presence of mind to scream. She would not have terrified her poor mother to no good purpose. Yet her agitation was so great, with augmented astonishment and terror, that she could not move.

He seized her violently, drew her up the stairs until they had reached the narrow attic passage, and commanding the negro to unlock the door that stood before

them, forced her into the room, dismissed the servant, locked the door on the inside, and turned upon her. Elsie had dropped into an old flag-bottomed armchair, where she sat shivering with cold and fear. He turned upon the delicate and trembling girl fiercely, scornfully, triumphantly, tauntingly, as if she had been some rough male adversary in his power. He placed the key in his pocket, buttoned up his overcoat, and stood looking at her with a bitter, sarcastic laugh, saying:

"You have insulted and provoked me sufficiently this evening, Miss Garnet! You were very happy and confident an hour ago. What do you think of your prospects now?"

Elsie shuddered and was silent.

"Can you escape from this room? Will you jump from one of those windows and fall a hundred feet? Will your lover find a ladder long enough to reach you? I think not. Can you break that lock? I think not. Will you bribe your jailer? I think not; for I shall be your jailer myself. No one else shall enter this room. And now listen to me," and taking a chair, he sat down before her, and said in a hard, harsh voice, "I do not care one jot for all the miserable, contemptible love sentiment in the world; I never did! I do not believe in it. I never did! But that which I want, and that which I will have, is the union of these two joining estates, Mount Calm and Hemlock Hollow. That project is as dear to old Mr. Hardcastle as it is to me. It was for that reason, and not upon account of any trifling, mutual predilection of yours, that we were about to negotiate a marriage between my daughter and his nephew, when fortunately Lionel came home in time to arrest the execution of the plan; of course it was perfectly easy to see what then became the duty of all parties."

"Fidelity," said Elsie in a low voice.

General Garnet laughed tauntingly, and continued without further notice of her reply:

"The young man who was to inherit the estate was to have the bride. It mattered nothing to me whether that were Magnus or Lionel; but the hand of my heiress was

to be bestowed upon the heir of Hemlock Hollow. That was the treaty. So I reminded old Mr. Hardcastle. He remembered that it really was so, and fully and entirely agreed with me. Young Lionel Hardcastle is also conformable. You only are contumacious. But I have pledged myself to your consent, and, by Heaven, you shall redeem my pledge. Listen, minion! You never leave this room until you leave it as the wife of Lionel Hardcastle. Curious place for a marriage ceremony! but, come, it does not matter; we can have the wedding afterward. You were to be the wife of Dr. Hardcastle, as you very respectfully call him, on Thursday week. Ha! ha! ha! Come, what do you think of your prospects of marrying him now?"

"Father, as far as my marriage with Dr. Hardcastle on Thursday week is concerned, my fate has gone out of my hands and into God's! I have no more to say about that."

"Ha! ha! I should think not. Not quite so confident as you were an hour ago, hey?"

"But, father, forgive me for reminding you that as far as marriage with any other person is concerned, that is entirely in my hands for refusal. Church and State very properly make the bride's consent an indispensable preliminary to marriage, and even a vital part of the marriage ceremony. And my consent can never be gained to marry Lionel."

"Ha! my pretty piece of stubbornness, we shall see. Pray, do you know—have you ever felt the power of solitary imprisonment, cold, and hunger, in bringing a contumacious girl to docility?"

Elsie's face flushed, more for him than herself.

He continued:

"For all those mighty engines can I spring upon you! And will I, by Satan and all his hosts!"

"Father, you may do that, and nature may faint and succumb to their power. I am very strong, but those things you threaten me with may be stronger still. But, father, if ever I am left with strength enough to stand before the minister with Lionel Hardcastle by my side,

when that minister shall ask me whether I will promise to love, honor, and obey him till death, I shall answer, 'No, I do not love him, I never did, I never shall. If I stand here to be married to him, it is to please my father, his father, and not myself! And so I cannot tell a falsehood, far less vow one in God's presence about it. I love Dr. Hardcastle, to whom you all know that I have been long engaged. I always did love him, and always shall,' and then let the minister of God marry us, if he durst."

With a furious oath he sprang upon her—seized her—the idea of strangling her upon the instant darted through his brain; but he only shook her with frenzied violence, and holding her in his terrible grip, said, with a husky voice and ashen cheek, and gleaming eye:

"If you were to do so, girl, as God in heaven hears me, I would kill you!"

And she felt to the very core of her shuddering heart that he told the truth. Then he dropped her, and threw himself out of the room, leaving her there, half dead with cold and fright, in the miserably bleak attic, without a spark of fire or light, for the lamp had been blown out by the fury with which her father had banged the door.

CHAPTER XXI.

CRUELTY—A CHAMBER SCENE.

Thou knowest not the meekness of love,
How it suffers and yet can be still—
How the calm on its surface may prove
What sorrow the bosom may fill.
—*Mrs. Ellis.*

EARLY the next morning Mrs. Garnet arose softly, without awaking the general, and thrusting her small feet in wadded slippers, and drawing on her wadded dressing-gown, passed into her daughter's chamber for the purpose of looking silently upon her while she slept, to see whether she bore the fatigue of the ball well. She

went in softly, drew the curtains of the bedstead, and to her surprise, found that it had not been slept in. Her first thought, of course, was that Elsie had remained all night at Point Pleasant.

She felt disappointed, and returned immediately to her own chamber, rang for her maid, and proceeded with her morning toilet.

Her maid, Milly, entered, bearing on her arm the cloak and hood that Elsie had worn to Point Pleasant, and afterward dropped while being dragged through the passage. Mrs. Garnet gazed at her in fixed astonishment, saying:

"Why, where did you get those, Milly? Is it possible that your Miss Elsie has returned so early this morning? Where is she?"

"Miss Elsie returned last night, missis, and must have dropped these in the passage, for that is where I found them."

"Returned last night! Her bed has not been occupied! Where is she?" exclaimed Mrs. Garnet, dropping the long mass of golden curls that she had been twisting into a knot, and standing aghast with vague terror. "Where is she? What is the meaning of this? Why do you look so strangely? Oh, my God! what has happened to my child? Speak this moment, Milly! What do you know of it?"

"I thought you must a' known, Miss Ally; marster's locked her up in the garret."

All the blood of the Chesters rushed to the brow of Alice, and crimsoned it.

"Locked Elsie up in the attic!" she exclaimed. Then: "Give me the keys! Where are they? Bring me the keys instantly!"

"Please, Miss Ally, marster took the garret key off of the bunch, and put it in his pocket."

"Leave me, Milly. Go! Hasten! Go downstairs! I don't want you this morning," said Alice, conscious of having betrayed too much emotion in the presence of her servant.

Milly left the room, and Alice hastened, with a flushed

brow, and trembling hand, to the big armchair at the head of the bed, over the back of which hung the general's clothing that he had worn the night before. Alice searched all the pockets of the overcoat in vain. And she took up the dress coat.

But while Alice was hunting for the key, the general had risen upon his elbow, and, unseen by her, was watching her motions with a demoniac leer.

Alice searched all the pockets of the dress coat, and it was not there. Then she raised the vest, and in the pocket found the key. She seized it eagerly, and was about to fly off with it when a heavy blow felled her to the floor! The key dropped from her hand. General Garnet stooped and repossessed himself of it, and looking at her with a laughing devil in his eye, said:

"Oh, was that you? Excuse me, madam! I beg ten thousand pardons; but waking up suddenly, and seeing a hand in my pocket, I naturally enough supposed it to be that of a thief! It's Heaven's mercy that I had not shot you by mistake, my dear!"

But seeing that she did not move, he leaned further over the side of the bed, and perceived that in falling the back of her head had struck the corner of the dressing bureau, and that she was stunned by the concussion—stunned or dead, he did not know which. He jumped to the floor and raised her. Her head and limbs fell helplessly over his arms. He laid her on the bed, ran his fingers through the golden tresses of her hair, but found no fracture; there might be a concussion of the brain, but there was no outward sign.

He started to the bell to ring it, but before he got there changed his mind and returned, locked the door, went to the bureau, and taking a couple of linen handkerchiefs, tore them in strips, and took a lancet from his case (all planters kept such things for the exigencies of the plantation). He then went to the bedside, ripped up the sleeve of Alice's dress, and baring the arm, opened a vein. As the blood began to flow—first very sluggishly, then faster—she opened her eyes and looked at him. He then bound up her arm, and telling her that he hoped

this harp lesson would teach her the danger of opposing his will again, left her and proceeded to dress himself.

Alice attempted to rise, but her head grew dizzy, her eyes dim, and she sank back at the same moment that he sternly bade her be still, and not venture to leave her bed that day. He dressed, and left the chamber.

At noon General Garnet returned and entered the room, and approaching the bedside asked Alice how she felt.

"Only drowsy, inclined to sleep while lying down, but sick and dizzy and blind when I attempt to rise."

"If that be the case, you must not, upon any account, yield to that inclination to sleep. It is dangerous; you must rise and sit up."

"I cannot—I wish I could—I cannot. I turn deadly sick as soon as my head is lifted."

"Alice—I—think I must bleed you again," he said, taking out the lancet and baring her arm. Then he hesitated a moment; he doubted whether this second bleeding would be right, but he resolved to risk it rather than risk the exposure of their secret by sending for a physician. He opened the vein again, and while the blood was trickling, looked so full of solicitude that Alice felt sorry for him, and said:

"Never mind; don't you know I knew it was an accident—the striking of my head against the bureau." She now looked so much better again that he ventured to say, as he bound up her arm:

"I hope, Alice, that this will be a profitable lesson to you, at least. Consider. You—you might have been killed." Then he raised her in a sitting posture, propped pillows behind her, took a seat in the big chair, and said: "This is really a trifle as it turns out, Alice. This dizziness will soon pass away if you sit up. Only, I hope, as I said before, that this will be a warning to you, for it might have been much more serious, or even fatal. It is dangerous, Alice, dangerous to rebel either by stratagem or force against just authority. And, now listen, for I wish to talk to you of Elsie for two reasons—first, to keep you from falling into an injurious

sleep; and, secondly, to let you know my reason for confining her, and my plans and purposes toward her."

And then General Garnet, for the first time, openly avowed to his wife his fixed determination to break off forever the projected marriage between Magnus and Elsie, and to bestow the hand of the latter upon Lionel Hardcastle, giving her his reasons in full for doing so, and declaring his intention to keep Elsie confined until her consent was obtained, and to take her then from her room at once to the altar, that no deception might be practiced. Alice dreaded lest he should ask her opinion, or her co-operation. Fortunately for her, he did not consider either of the least importance, and soon rising, left the room and went down to dinner.

Alice pressed both hands to her head and groaned forth the prayer:

"Oh, God! guide me aright through this labyrinth of crossing duties, lest I lose my way!"

In the afternoon General Garnet went out again.

And soon after he was gone Milly entered her mistress' chamber and put in her hand a little slip of paper, which she said Elsie had given her as she handed in her dinner.

Alice took it eagerly. It was the flyleaf of her pocket prayer-book, and on it was picked with a pin the sentence:

"Say something to me, beloved mother."

Alice asked for a pencil, and wrote:

"To-morrow I will write, dear child." And then the pencil dropped from her hand. "Milly, when you take her supper up, give her that," she said, and closed her eyes from exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARRIAGE.

Take her, and be faithful still,
And may the marriage vow
Be sacred kept in after years,
And fondly breathed as now.
—*Old Song.*

THE next morning, after General Garnet had left the house—for the whole day—Alice arose, still dizzy and weak, not only from the effects of the blow, but from fasting and anxiety. She was scarcely seated in her chair when a letter was brought to her that had come in the mail bag from the post office. It was superscribed in the handwriting of Dr. Hardcastle. Alice tore it open, and read a much longer epistle than I can find space to transcribe here, reader, but the sum total of it was this: Magnus informed his friend Alice of what she already knew—General Garnet's expressed determination to break the engagement existing between himself and Elsie, for mere mercenary motives; of his own and Elsie's fixed resolution to abide by their betrothal, and his hopes that their decision would meet her—Alice's—approval. He told her of his wish that their marriage should take place on Thursday, as had been first proposed; and of his intention to depart on the following Monday for his home, among the new settlements in the backwoods of Maryland. He told her, farther, that he had called the day before to see her and Elsie, but that he had been refused admittance at the very threshold, the servants adducing their master's commands as their warrant. He had heard, he said, that Elsie was immured, but hoped and believed that this was not so. He concluded by entreating Alice to write and inform him of her own and Elsie's state of health and spirits, and advise him how to proceed.

Alice folded the letter, clasped her hands, and closed her eyes a moment in intense thought and prayer. Then,

bidding Milly wheel her writing table before her, she took pen and paper, and wrote the following short but important note:

"DEAR MAGNUS:

"As soon as you see this, go to a locksmith and send him instantly to me. Then get a carriage, procure your license, call at Fig's to take up the young Methodist minister who boards there, and come at once to Mount Calm. When you return, Elsie shall accompany you.

"Your friend,

"ALICE GARNET."

She sealed this note, dispatched it, and then dropped her head into her hands, holding it tightly, as though to chain thought to its object. Then once more she drew her writing desk nearer to her, took her pen, and wrote these hurried lines to Elsie:

"Within a very few hours from this, my own dear Elsie, you will be released and married. And now let me tell you, my own dear child, my reasons for advising and aiding you in this step. It is not only, my Elsie, that your heart has long been given to Magnus; that your hand has long been pledged to him with the approbation of both your parents; that your happiness is concerned in being united to him; that your honor is implicated in keeping faith with him; it is not, either, that it would be a heinous wickedness to forsake your betrothed at the very moment that fortune forsakes him, and in the hour of his greatest adversity; it is not that this very desertion of yours would shake his faith in all that is good and true in heaven or on earth, palsy his energy and enterprise, and thus do him a serious mortal and social injury. And, on the other hand, it is not that you do not love Lionel. No, Elsie, it is simply because Magnus is entirely the better man of the two,—better, incomparably better,—physically, mentally, morally, religiously. Magnus is healthful, strong, handsome, energetic, highly intellectual, purely moral, profoundly religious; and he

loves you completely. Lionel is broken in constitution, evidently by excess; indolent, selfish, voluptuous, yet irritable and often violent. His interest in you is a low compound of vanity, cupidity, and sense—it would be false and profane to call it by the sacred name of love. Magnus would make you better and happier, in loving you greatly, in elevating your moral and religious nature, while Lionel would draw you down to the misery and degradation of his own low nature. My child, my one lone child, it is for this consideration that I bar you from wealth, luxury, ease, adulation, and give you to the stern but kindly discipline of poverty, toil, and privation —with love by your side, to lighten all your labors and God above you to reward them. May God love you, my only child! my little Elsie!"

No tear-drop blotted this paper, though her tears had fallen thick, and fast, and blindingly, while she wrote it. She had turned her head away; for no sign of sorrow should wound and weaken Elsie in the letter written to comfort and sustain her. She had turned her head away, and the tears had rained upon her lap. Many times she had arisen from her writing desk and fallen, overcome with grief, upon the bed. But it was done. She had succeeded. And there was nothing upon the paper or in the letter to betray the anguish of mind in which it was written.

Trying to steer as blamelessly as she could through her labyrinth of duties, Alice would not call one of the servants, all of whom had been expressly forbidden to approach the attic, but took the paper herself, went feebly up the stairs, and supporting herself by the balustrades, she reached the topmost landing, and went to the door of Elsie's room.

"You are there, dear mother. I know your footstep so well, though it is weaker than usual. And if I did not know your footsteps, I should know your sigh. Dear mother, do not grieve for me. I am happy—reverently be it spoken—as Peter was in prison."

"My darling Elsie, here is something I have written

for you. I will push it under the bottom of the door. Take it, darling, read it. Try to compose your mind, and be ready for me very soon. I must go now, dear, for when you begin to read that you will find I have a great deal to prepare. Good-by, for an hour, my dear."

Alice then went down, entered her chamber, and rang for Milly; then she went to her drawers and caskets, and got together all the jewelry that she possessed, to the amount of several thousand dollars, and all Elsie's, that amounted to several thousand more, and placed them in one strong casket. Then she searched her purse and pocketbook, and took out all the money she had in possession, a few hundred dollars, and put it in a strong packet. Then she sent Milly into Elsie's vacant chamber, and had all her clothing collected and packed into two large, strong traveling trunks. Next, she sent for a man-servant to come and lock and strap them down before her face. Lastly, she received the keys from him, and told him to procure assistance, take the trunks down, put them into a cart, carry them over to Huttontown, and leave them at Mr. Fig's, with a request from her that he would keep them until they were called for. When Alice had done this she was told that a man wished to see her in the hall.

She went out, and found the locksmith with his tools. She bade him to follow her, and led the way up into the attic, and to the door of Elsie's prison. She stopped there, and turning to the locksmith, said:

"Pick this lock."

No sooner said than done. The man put in his instrument and unlocked it with as much ease as though he had used a key.

"There, thank you, sir! you need not open the door. Please to retire now. Milly, my girl, will settle with you downstairs," said Alice, who did not by any means wish to "reveal the secrets of that prison-house."

The man bowed, gathered his tools, and went downstairs.

Alice opened the door, and was instantly locked in the arms of her daughter. Fearing to lose her courage and

presence of mind, perhaps trembling for the strength of her purpose, too, Alice did not venture to indulge these enervating endearments, but hastened to say:

"You read and understood my note, my dear Elsie?"

"Yes, mother."

"You know, then, what is about to take place?"

"Yes, dear mother."

"Come, then, my child, we must be quick. I expect Magnus here with the license and the minister every minute. Your trunks are already packed and sent off to Huttontown. Where are your diamonds, Elsie? I did not see them among your jewelry. They are the greatest portion of your dower now, my child. Where are they? I wish to put them into a casket that I have packed for you."

"Here they are, mother, with the ball dress in which I came to prison."

"Ah, that ball dress, put that on, it will do as well as another; or, no, you will perhaps have no time to change it afterward. Come down into my room, and put on your traveling dress at once. I have left it out with your bonnet; come, Elsie."

"If you please, ma'am, Dr. Hardcastle and Parson Wilson are downstairs, inquiring for you," said a servant from the foot of the interdicted stairs.

"Invite them into the back parlor, and say that I will be with them in a few minutes," said Alice. "Come, Elsie, hasten, dear, and let me dress you." She drew Elsie down.

She felt no weakness or dizziness now. She was upheld by a strange excitement. Her cheeks and lips seemed burning, and her eyes blazing as with a hectic fever.

Arrived in her own chamber, she quickly assisted Elsie to put on her traveling dress, smoothing her beautiful auburn ringlets, pressed her again fondly to her bosom, tied on her little beaver bonnet, and led her downstairs into the back parlor, where Dr. Hardcastle and the minister sat.

Both came forward, bowed, and shook hands

"Oh! for God's sake have it over quickly, Magnus, lest my strength fail!" said Alice, trembling violently.

The minister drew the prayer book from his pocket and opened it.

Elsie suddenly lost every vestige of color, and threw herself again into her mother's arms. Alice pressed her passionately to her heart a moment, and then gave her up to Magnus, who took her hand, passed his arm around her waist to support her, and stood before the minister.

In ten more minutes Magnus Hardcastle had the joy of clasping his wife to his bosom.

"Thank Heaven that it is over! Oh-h-h! Ugh-gh-h! I felt my flesh creeping all the time, as if father were peeping over my shoulder," exclaimed Elsie, shuddering, and burying her head under the arm of Magnus.

"Yes, thank Heaven, it is over! It was short. A few solemn words of exhortation, a brief prayer, a briefer benediction, and now I possess you, without a doubt, or dispute—entirely. The laws of God and man give you to me alike, and no power under heaven can tear you from me, my own Elsie! my own wife!" said Magnus fervently, and almost crushing her in his arms.

"Yes, thank Heaven it is over! The doubt, the struggle, and the fear is over. You are safe, Elsie. Your happiness, as far as human foresight can secure it, is insured," said Alice, as she received Elsie once more from the arms of Magnus, and folded her in her own.

"But you! Oh, my dear mother! you will be left without your child!"

"Never regret me, my own darling. You go without your mother, but you go with your husband, and you are happy. Are you not, my Elsie?"

"Oh, yes, yes, mamma."

"Well, I am left without my daughter, but I remain with my husband. Think that I am happy also," said Alice, feeling thankful to Providence from the bottom of her heart, that Elsie was "innocent of the knowledge" of General Garnet's tyranny over herself.

Yet Elsie half suspected, she knew not what. She looked deeply, searchingly, for an instant into her

mother's dark blue eyes, as if to read the secret of the deep sorrow in them.

But Alice dropped her long lashes, and averted her head.

Then Elsie took her hand, and bending round to look into her troubled face, said, slowly, earnestly, tearfully:

"You love my father dearly, very dearly; don't you, mamma? Say, don't you, mamma? Oh! don't you, mamma?"

"Yes, Elsie, I love him," said Alice, in a very low voice, turning again to her daughter.

"Oh, mamma, you love him as well as I love Magnus! Don't you, mamma? Don't you? You love him better than you love me, and you will be very happy with him even when I am gone? Say, mamma! Oh, tell me before I go."

For an answer Alice stooped and kissed her daughter on the forehead.

"But oh! tell me before I go! Tell me that you love my father better than you love me, and that you will be very happy with him when I am gone," said Elsie, growing more anxious for an answer every instant.

Alice turned very pale.

And Magnus, who saw that she was fast losing her self-control, came to her relief, by saying, as he approached, took her hand, and drew her off:

"I have a word to say to you, if you please, Mrs. Garnet."

They went to a window, leaving Elsie near the parson.

"Mrs. Garnet! Cousin Alice! Dearest friend! I have a proposal to make to you that must surprise and may shock and offend you. But nevertheless, I make it. Listen to me, Alice. I know too well what you have risked for us, and what you have incurred at the hands of your husband this day! Alice! I fear—I tremble at the thought of leaving you here alone, and exposed to his terrible wrath. You——"

But Alice raised her hand and gently arrested his speech.

"Magnus, forgive me for reminding you that you should not talk to me in that way. General Garnet's displeasure, as far as I am implicated, will perhaps be just. You and Elsie were right. Your faith was pledged with his consent. You were right in redeeming your mutual pledge. But I, perhaps, was wrong in assisting you in it. I do not clearly know. Oh, Magnus, for many years my ideas of right and wrong have been very much confused. For many years I have lost sight of the exact line that divides good and evil. Oh, Magnus, when the eyes are dimmed with tears, the sight is not very clear—and when the soul is drowned in grief, Magnus, the moral vision may be very much obscured. But this I know—that General Garnet's anger, just or unjust, moderate or violent, I must meet, and meet alone. By all means alone! The dignity of both is concerned in that."

"Alice, you must not! Hear me! Listen to me! Do not turn away with that air of gentle self-respect, and wave me off! Don't I know that your heart is breaking this moment—this moment, that your child is leaving you, and you are left desolate and exposed to danger! Desolate, wretched, in peril, though you would have her to believe otherwise? Oh, Alice, you may deceive the child of your bosom, but you will not deceive the boy who sat at your feet and loved you, and studied the mystery of the sorrow on your brow when you came home a bride, and everybody called you happy. I was not deceived then; I have not been deceived since. Oh, Alice, my love for Elsie, my love for you, my relation toward both, give me the right to feel, the right to speak and advise. Hear me: You must not remain here to meet the anger of your husband. Your life—your life will be endangered. Nay! do not lift your hand to stop my speech; hear my plan; hear me out—I will be very brief. Listen! You love Elsie and me. Go with us when we leave here. Go with us to our backwoods home. Our home will be humble, but full of peace and love, and the repose you so much need. We shall be poor, but you shall not feel it. Respectful and loving hands will wait on you all day

long. You will be happy with us. Remain with us till the storm blows over. There need be—there would be—no exposure, no gossip, no scandal. To the neighbors who knew of our betrothal, our marriage and departure will seem perfectly natural, only rather unsocial because we did not give a wedding. And I can answer for the discretion and fidelity of Wilson. Your accompanying us, for a visit, will seem nothing unusual. General Garnet, if I mistake not, is too much a man of the world not to keep his own secret, and too much of a despot not to enforce silence upon his people, in regard to this matter. General Garnet will be very anxious to get you back before your visit is prolonged to a suspicious extent. And then, Alice, while you are safe with us, you can make your own conditions with him for your return. You can secure for yourself——"

"Stop! Magnus, I do not wish to mar the harmony of this sad hour by one dissonant word or thought or feeling. But let me hear no more of this. Not one breath more, dearest Magnus. What! I leave my home! leave my husband, and remain away to make conditions with him! I, who unconditionally pledged myself to him 'for better or worse'—I, who vowed love, honor and obedience to him 'until death'! No Magnus. That marriage vow, in all its details, is not to be tampered with. It is not a question of happiness, or of peace, or of expedience, or of repose, or of affection, but simply of duty. No, Magnus. When I hastened to bestow my daughter upon you, it was for the reason that I believed you to be one toward whom it would be a happiness as well as duty to keep sacred, in all its minutiæ, that marriage vow."

"Alice, dearest Alice, your heart is very mournful, and, forgive me for saying it, very morbid."

"It is? Call Elsie, then. Her feelings are all singularly healthful. Call her, and in her presence just invite me to go with you, simply to go with you—that will be the mildest form of your proposal—and see what Elsie will say. Come, do so."

Magnus turned with a smile, and beckoned Elsie to

approach. Elsie came, with her bright face beaming with interest and inquiry.

"Elsie, my love," said Magnus, "I have been trying to persuade your mother to accompany us to our new home, and remain there for a few weeks."

"And leave father so suddenly, when I am leaving him, too! Oh, don't press her to do any such a thing, dear Magnus. Oh, don't think of leaving father just now, dearest mother," said Elsie earnestly; then throwing herself in her mother's arms, whispered anxiously: "Mother, don't you love father? Oh, mother, tell me, before I go, that you love father."

"Yes, Elsie, I do love him. No, Magnus, I cannot leave him. I have helped to bereave him of his child for a season—I cannot leave him."

"But, oh, Alice!" said Magnus, drawing her apart, "think again! think what you will meet. How can you brave his anger?"

"I shall not brave it, Magnus. It may be just, coming from him. At least I must bear it—patiently, too."

Just then the door was burst open by a servant, who exclaimed, in affright:

"Madam!—mistress!—doctor!—Miss Elsie! Marster is a riding down the road, post-haste, to the house!"

"Oh, my God! there is not a moment to spare. Good-by, my beloved child. God bless you!" said Alice, straining her daughter to her bosom.

"Oh, mother, don't you love father dearly? Tell me once more."

"Yes, yes, Elsie."

"Oh, mother, if you love him so dearly, get my pardon from him. Tell him how I grieve to be under the necessity of offending him. Get my pardon for me, beloved mother."

"I will do my very best. God bless you, my darling child! Good-by! Oh, Magnus, be good to her, be merciful, be loving, be tender. Oh, Magnus, I have torn the heart from my bosom and given it to you. Be good to her."

"May God deal by my soul as I deal by her heart!"

said Magnus, folding his mother-in-law in a fervent embrace.

Then they hurried out, hastened into the carriage, the blinds were let down, the doors closed, the whip cracked, and the vehicle rolled away.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"THE HEART OVERTASKED."

Oh, break, break, heart! poor bankrupt, break at once.
To prison, soul! Ne'er hope for liberty!
—*Shakspere.*

Oh! do whate'er thou wilt! I will be silent.
—*Joanna Baillie.*

ALICE heard an advancing step. She looked around. Milly stood at her side.

"Where is your master? Did he enter by the back gate? Is he at the stables?" she inquired.

"Miss Alice, no, ma'am; he didn't come home at all. He didn't even meet the carriage. He turned off 'fore he got to the porter's lodge, and rode hard as he could down the path as leads down the Hollow. I 'spects how he had some 'litical business long o' Mr. Hard'stle."

"Oh, thank Heaven!" said Alice, with a long-drawn sigh of relief, and rising, she hurried off to her own chamber. Not to sit down in faithless despair, but to write a letter to General Garnet, softly and meekly breaking to him the news of their daughter's marriage, so that the first shock of astonishment and rage should be over before he should come home and she should have to meet him. She wrote this letter. It contained all that she had said in her letter to Elsie, and much more; besides, a meek, appealing spirit pervaded it, that few hearts could have resisted. She dispatched it by a servant to General Garnet at Hemlock Hollow. Then she lay down and tried to sleep.

She was disturbed by the entrance of a servant bearing a letter.

She raised up and took it. It was for General Garnet, and bore the post-mark of Huttontown. She regarded it attentively for an instant, for it was written in a coarse, schoolboy-like hand.

Then she placed it on the dressing-table, and, dismissing the servant, lay down and closed her eyes again, with an effort to sleep. She could not do so for a long time. Emotion was busy in her heart, and thought in her brain. One, two, three hours passed; and then she prayed, prayed for the promised rest, and, praying, fell asleep.

She did not know how long she had slept, when, waking, she perceived General Garnet in the room.

He was sitting in the large armchair near the bed, and his attention riveted upon a letter he was reading. Alice glanced at the dressing-table. The letter she had placed there was gone. Yes, it was that letter which he was reading with such fixed interest.

Alice lay quietly, yet anxiously watching him, until he finished reading, folded up the letter, and put it in his pocket. His attitude was one of deep, even intense, thought. In the crimson twilight of that closely curtained chamber she could not see the expression of his face. It was evident, she thought, that he had not seen her in the shadowy recess where her sofa stood.

After thus watching a moment, breathing a prayer for mercy, she slowly arose, crossed the room, and sank upon the cushion near his feet, took his hand, and looked up pleadingly into his face.

Alice was still a very beautiful woman, as I have told you, and never was a more beautiful picture than that kneeling figure, with the bright, flowing hair, flushed cheek, and upturned, pleading gaze with which she sought silently to deprecate the anger of her husband. She sought to read her fate in his countenance; but that high and haughty face was lifted and averted, and its features were stern, and calm, and impassible. Then she found words to speak, and inquired, softly:

"You received my letter, General Garnet?"

"Yes, madam, I received your letter," he answered, in a hard, cold tone of voice.

"Then you know what else I should tell you here at your feet."

"I know that my daughter has eloped, and that my wife helped her off," he replied, in the same dry tone, and with his head still averted.

Alice could not see that his lips were bloodless and compressed, and his eyes burning with a fearful, lurid glare. His very quietude, hard and dry, and constrained as it was, deceived her. She took his hand again and pressed it to her lips, and held it to her bosom, murmuring softly:

"Let us forgive each other! Oh, my husband, let us forgive each other! For many wrongs there is positively no other remedy in the wide universe but simple forgiveness—simple, magnanimous, sublime forgiveness. 'It is impossible but that offenses will come,' said the most merciful of all beings. It is impossible, says the experience of life, it is impossible but that disappointments, sorrows, pains, and partings will come. They are the conditions of our existence. We cannot escape them. Let us lessen their bitterness as much as we may. It is impossible but that troubles will come, but the vital question is whether we shall turn them to good or evil account—whether we shall live to any good end or not. Oh, my husband, make friends with me! We have only each other in the wide world upon whom to depend for our life's comfort and happiness. Make friends with me!"

She paused, covering his hand with fond caresses, pressing it to her lips, laying it against her cheek, holding it to her throbbing heart. He drew his hand from her gentle clasp, and folded his arms.

Alice sank back, sobbing—sobbing, as though her heart would burst—then suddenly she clasped his knees, exclaiming wildly: "Can we hate each other—you and I who have lived so many years together? Can we hate each other—you and I, who love our only child, our dear Elsie, so much? Make friends with me! Let us under-

stand each other! Let us be candid with each other! Let us forbear each other! I know that you deeply regret the failure of your favorite plan to unite these estates. I know it; I am sorry for it; sorry that I have been constrained to have a hand in it. But, oh, General Garnet, I, too, you know, was once—long years ago—bitterly disappointed—terribly disappointed! But it is all over now; it has all been over many years ago! And that is what I have often wanted to tell you, when I saw by the cold, dark shadow on your brow that you thought yourself unloved. But I never could approach you near enough to tell you—to tell you that if you would look into my heart you would see it filled with the love of God, of my husband, and my child. Oh, Aaron! let us forget all that estranged us in the dreary past, and see if we cannot live a better and happier life in the future! At least we can be kind, candid, forbearing with each other. Think how long we may have to travel the rough road of mortal life side by side! We are not old—you and I, Aaron! You are not forty-five, and I am much younger. People healthful as we are usually live to the age of eighty and beyond it. Think how many years we may have to live together! Shall we, through all these years, be unloving, cold, estranged, suspicious, uncharitable each to the other? Think how many years of our life we have already wasted in coolness, strangeness, misunderstandings! Think how many yet remain! Shall we not live the rest in mutual forbearance, candor, benevolence? Make friends with me. Let us comprehend each other. Dear Aaron, I have opened my heart to you; give me your confidence!" She ceased, half turned to gaze up in his face; his head was quite averted—had he relented? She thought so. She suddenly, impulsively arose, threw her arms around his neck, and bent her lips to kiss him, repeating softly: "Dearest Aaron, make friends with me. Give me your confidence."

He sprang up, and with one dash of his strong arm threw her from him, exclaiming:

"Off, traitress! Off, serpent! Viper!"

She tottered and fell back among the silken cushions

of an old-fashioned low lounge, exhausted, pale, and shuddering.

He gazed at her with flashing eyes and darkening brow, and white and writhen lips, and the long restrained passion broke out in a torrent of invective. Shaking his clenched fist at her, he exclaimed:

"How dare you talk to me of confidence, traitress that you are? How durst you even approach me, serpent! viper! after your black treachery? What do you mean by braving me? Are you enamored of a broken head? Or do you think your own too hard to be broken? At what do you value your life, pray? What hinders me now from strangling you? Why didn't you fly with your hopeful daughter? Don't you expect me to hurl you out of doors after her? How durst you cross my path after your treachery? Viper, answer me, I say!" he vociferated, striding toward the lounge, grasping her shoulder, and jerking her to her feet before him. "Answer! How dared you face me after your black treachery?"

"It was no treachery," answered Alice, pale and trembling, yet with a certain gentle dignity in her words and tone; "it was no treachery; I broke no promise; I betrayed no trust; I am incapable of doing either."

"Silence, traitress!" he thundered, shaking her furiously; "I do not ask you for any impudent falsehood; I will not, by Heaven, permit you to tell me one! I ask you how you dared to meet me here?"

"Oh-h-h!" sighed Alice, suddenly sinking at his feet. "It was to return to my allegiance; at whatever personal risk, to yield myself to you; to abide henceforth by my duties. And oh, General Garnet, do not misunderstand me! If I have humbled myself before you—vainly, perhaps, it is not from so base a motive as fear! Oh, I have outlived and outsuffered the fear of pain—the fear of death—the fear of anything that might befall me! I am at your feet. If I have placed myself unconditionally in your hands, it is for the sake of the holiest principles, the most sacred duties. General Garnet, you believe me—I see that you do! General Garnet. listen to

me farther; this is positively the first time in our married life of seventeen years that I ever opposed you."

"The first time that you ever successfully opposed me, madam; and, by Heaven, you have made a signal beginning!" commented General Garnet, no longer speaking in a furious voice, but in the dry, hard, stern tone, and fixed, inflexible brow with which he had in the beginning of their interview heard and replied to her gentle words. The burst of violent passion had passed away and left him—the hard, scornful, sarcastic, yet cool, calculating, dissembling, most dangerous man that he was before.

Alice gazed up at his face, seeking to read the changed expression there; but it passed her skill, and she murmured slowly:

"Perhaps I was wrong; I know that under other circumstances it would have been very wrong; yet I dare not say that I regret what I did, for under the same circumstances I should do it again. Not to obtain your forgiveness would I deceive you, though to obtain it would make me comparatively happy; but I deeply regret that anything I had a hand in should give you pain. And I say, do as you please, I shall not complain, I cannot. From the one revolt of my whole life I return to a full and unconditional allegiance; there is nothing farther to disturb it, nothing to draw me aside. My love for my child only did it; that cannot move me again."

"Ha! can it not?" he asked scornfully.

"No, no, indeed it cannot!"

"Never!"

"Never! How can my love for Elsie ever again draw me aside from you? Elsie is married and gone; now I have only you; my duty is undivided—and, oh, if you would let me, I would try to make you so happy!"

"Would you?" he asked, doubtfully, scornfully.

"Yes, I would," she said, suddenly rising, leaning her hand upon his arm, and her head upon his shoulder, with the confidence of perfect love and faith. "Oh, Aaron, you have not been yourself for a few days past. Yet I do not love you the less on that account; indeed, I do not. Oh, Aaron, I can excuse your violence more

than you can excuse yourself, I know, for I have been used to it in others. My father was violent sometimes. And I know that anger is a brief intoxication—'a short madness'—in which people do and say what they never intended. Come, you are not angry now; you are smiling; and I—I can only repeat what I said in the beginning, 'Let us forgive each other, and live better and happier all our future lives.' That is right—put your arm around me, dear Aaron, for I am very weak."

It was scarcely in human nature, or in devil nature, to resist the charm of her winning beauty, gentleness, and meekness. General Garnet pressed a passionate kiss upon her lips, and clasped her to his heart. It was the first kiss of many, many years; and Alice, trembling, happy, with her blushing face hidden on his bosom, saw not the "laughing devil in his eye."

"Oh, Aaron, this is generous—this is magnanimous. Oh, Aaron, if you knew how the simple act of forgiveness has power to bind the human heart! I know it by the way it draws my heart to yours," said Alice, with enthusiasm.

But another and a more passionate kiss sealed her lips for a time.

At last she said:

"My friend, how has it been with you this long, long time? I mean how has it been with your heart and soul, your inner life? Have you been happy—have you had any great life purpose? Oh, Aaron, often when I have watched you in your daily life, as you walked, or rode, or drove; as you sat at table, or at your writing-desk, or settled business with your overseer or agents; or jested or told anecdotes among your friends; when you have seemed to live lightly on the outside of things, I have longed to ask you, 'How is with you—is this reality, and is this all of your life, and are you contented with it—are you happy?' And when I have seen you sit, or stand, or walk apart, silent, moody, abstracted, retired into yourself, I have longed to knock at your heart's door, to be let in, too—to be let into your confidence, and to give you my sympathy, but I dared never to do so.

It has taken the grief and passion of this hour to enable me to do so now. But this shall never be so again, shall it? We shall never be such strangers to each other again? Come, tell me now—how it is with you. Are you happy?"

"Quite happy, just at this hour, Alice."

"And do you truly love me—a little? Oh, love me—only love me!"

"Love you! That is not so difficult, Alice. You are still a very lovely woman."

"Will you let me deliver Elsie's last message to you?"

He quickly averted his face to hide the dark cloud that overswept it, while he answered:

"I will hear it."

"Elsie's parting words to me were, 'Oh, mother, you love my father very dearly, do you not?' I answered, 'Yes.' She replied, 'Oh, if you love him, mother, win my pardon from him!' Aaron, look on me. Father, forgive your child for loving her husband as much as her mother loves thee."

"Alice," he said, drawing her again to his bosom and kissing her, "this seals your full pardon; be content; for the rest, give me time."

"Oh, if I could persuade you to forgive poor Elsie—who only needs her father's pardon and blessing to be perfectly happy in her humble state."

"Alice, if Elsie were before me, as you are, in all your beauty, perhaps I could not choose but be reconciled with her as with you, my lovely Alice."

Alice was so unused to praise from him that these words and caresses were beginning to embarrass her. Blushing like a very girl, she withdrew herself from his arms, and sat down. Then, as fearing to have offended, she said:

"Do not think me ungrateful. Test my sincerity in any way you please."

"In any way, Alice?" he asked significantly.

"Yes. Try me—test me."

"Pause—think—in any way?"

"In anything and everything will I obey you, that does not transgress the laws of God, I mean, of course."

"Ah, that to begin with, is one very broad and comprehensive exception—especially if you design to give it a very liberal and latitudinarian interpretation. And it implies, besides, a suspicion and a guard against my giving you any command which, to obey, would be to transgress the laws of God. Do you really suppose that I am capable of doing such a thing, Alice?"

"No—oh, no. Only you pressed me for an exception, you know, and I gave you the only one I thought of."

"I am satisfied with your exception, Alice. But is that really the only exception to your vow of compliance?"

"Yes, indeed, the only one."

"Reflect—you may find another."

"No; indeed, no."

"No? What is the dearest wish of your heart, now, Alice?"

"For peace—for perfect family peace and perfect Christian love."

"Thanks, Alice. 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' But is there no secret, darling thought that hovers around Magnus and Elsie?"

Alice suddenly turned very pale. Her hands flew up pleadingly, and involuntarily she cried, in a voice of anguish:

"Oh, for the loving Saviour's sake, do not require me to renounce Elsie!"

"If I did, would you do so, Alice?"

She was silent, with her head bowed upon her clasped hands.

He looked at her and smiled sardonically, saying:

"I knew it—another exception! How many would follow this, I wonder? But be easy, Alice. I do not require you to renounce your daughter. Far be that from me. Hold her as closely to your heart as you wish. Nothing but nervousness could have put that thought into your head. Have I not said that even I might be brought to forgive Elsie? Pshaw, dear Alice, I only

wished to prove to you how really vain were all your promises."

"No, they are not!" exclaimed Alice earnestly, energetically. "You have reconciled yourself to me when I least hoped and expected it, and I will do anything to prove how glad I am—anything except renounce Elsie or fail in my higher duty to Heaven. Oh, do not close your half-opened heart to me again! Try me!"

"Good! I will put your sincerity to one more test. And woe to both if that third test should prove you faithless."

"It shall not—it shall not!" said Alice solemnly. "All our future confidence and peace depends on it, and it shall not fail, so help me Heaven. What is it?"

"You shall soon see, Alice," replied General Garnet, rising and preparing to leave the room. "Where are they now?—I mean Dr. Hardcastle and his wife."

"I believe they are at the hotel at Huttontown, where they expect to remain for a few days—if you do not bring them back here. Oh, General Garnet, if you would pardon them—if you would bring them back here to live with us—how happy we should all be—oh, how happy we should all be the long future years! No more partings—no more tears. Our children and grandchildren would be with us all through life. Magnus could practice his profession, and be of such inestimable value besides, in your political plans, and such company for you at home. And Elsie would be such a comfort to me. We should all be so happy! Come, bring them back with you. Ah! do. Let us have them with us, all reconciled, around the table to-night—and it will be the happiest family gathering that ever was held. Oh, I see you smile, and I know you will bring them back—will you not?" said Alice, suddenly seizing his hand, and gazing eloquently, beseechingly into his face.

"We shall see, Alice—I will tell you more about that when I return," he said, with one of his charming smiles, and shaking her hand cheerfully, opened the door and went out.

"Oh, yes—I do believe he will bring them back with him. Ah, no father can harden his heart against his child. Yes, yes, I am sure he will bring them back!" she repeated, seeking to still the anxiety that was torturing her breast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WIFE'S TRUST.

I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart,
But I know that I love thee, whatever thou art.
—*Moore.*

THE sun was going down when a servant entered the chamber and announced that Judge Wylie was below stairs and begged to see Mrs. Garnet alone upon important business.

Telling the man to show Judge Wylie into the library, Alice threw a shawl around her, and, full of vague and painful misgivings, descended the stairs.

What could be the important business upon which Judge Wylie came? What business, trifling or important, could he have with her? Had any accident happened to Elsie? The thought gripped her heart like a vise. Had anything happened to Magnus or General Garnet?

Trembling and pale, and almost overwhelmed by the trials of the day, she opened the library door and entered in.

Judge Wylie was standing there awaiting her. Judge Jacky's usually jubilant face was now overcast and troubled as he advanced to meet Alice, took her hand, led her to a settee, and seated himself beside her. He pressed her hand with paternal kindness and said, gravely and gently:

"My dear Mrs. Garnet, you will pardon the liberty about to be taken by your oldest friend."

"For Heaven's sake—what has——" happened, she was about to ask, but the words died on her pale lips.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear Mrs. Garnet. Nothing has occurred since the marriage—you perceive that I know all about it. But it is to warn you—to put you upon your guard against something about to occur, that I come to you this evening."

"For God's sake—what? what?"

"Be easy. Nothing that you have not in your full power to avert by a little firmness."

"For Heaven's sake, explain yourself, Judge Wylie."

"You know something, I presume, of the Maryland laws of property, of inheritance, and of marriage?"

"No, no; I know nothing about it."

"At least you know that when a girl marries, all the personal property she may be possessed of at the time of her marriage, or may afterward inherit, becomes the property of her husband?"

"Yes, of course, I know that."

"Yes, but—listen. All the landed property she possesses at the time of her marriage, or afterward inherits, is hers—hers alone. Her husband can neither alienate it during his life, or will it at his death. He cannot mortgage it, nor assign it, nor can it be taken for his debts. It is hers, and hers alone. She alone has the disposal of it."

"Yes. Well?"

"Therefore, all the personal property you became possessed of at the death of your father is the property of General Aaron Garnet."

"Certainly. Who disputes it? Well?"

"But. And now listen! All the landed property, consisting of six thousand acres of the best land on the Western Shore, which you inherited from your father, is yours, your own, and at your death it is your daughter's, if she survive you, and unless you choose to will it to someone else. General Garnet can make no disposition of it either during your life or at your death."

"It seems to me, Judge Wylie, that this conversation is a very singular one," said Alice coldly.

"Not so singular or so impertinent—that is what you mean—as it appears to be. Bear with me. Hear me

out. I speak for your good, and your child's good. I have before me now the face of your sainted mother. I loved her in my youth, Alice; but that is neither here nor there. Well, this is what I had to say: Your daughter Elsie has, by her marriage, grievously offended her father. He may or may not pardon her. He may discard her. Do not put it in his power to disinherit her."

Alice turned very pale.

"Why do you say that to me?" she asked falteringly.

"Because," he answered, "it is said that women can always be kissed or kicked out of any right of property they may happen to possess. Now, don't you, my little Alice, be kissed out of your six thousand acres of finely clutivated and heavily timbered, well-watered land, with all its land and water privileges. The best plantation within the bounds of old Maryland. Don't you be kissed out of it, little Alice, for it makes you independent and of great importance. Don't you be kissed out of it, Ailce, for you can leave it to your beloved daughter, who will need it. Don't you be kissed out of it, Alice, my child; and as for the other alternative, my courteous friend, General Garnet, is far too much of a gentleman to resort to it, either literally or metaphorically."

"Judge Wylie, why do you talk to me in this way? You are my oldest friend; you have a certain privilege. I beseech you, forbear to abuse it," said Alice, divided between mortification and anxiety. The latter at last prevailed, and she asked: "Why did you open up this subject just now, Judge Wylie? You came to tell me why, I suppose. Tell me now at once."

"Well, then, only this, Alice. That about an hour ago I happened in at Squire Fox's office, where General Garnet was superintending the drawing up of a deed. An involuntary—a providential—glance, now I think it was, over the clerk's shoulder revealed to me the fact that he was drawing up a deed of assignment, by which you were to convey all your right, title, and interest in the landed property of Mount Calm to General Aaron Garnet. General Garnet then turned to me and requested me to meet him here to-night, to witness your signature.

I asked, with surprise, if you had consented to give it. He looked offended, and expressed astonishment at my question. By which I knew that he intended to come upon you by a coup de main, and I came off here to put you on your guard."

"Oh, is that all?" asked Alice, with a sigh of great relief. "Well, Judge Wylie, if anyone else in the wide world had talked to me as you have been talking for the last ten minutes, I should have said that they took a most unwarrantable and most offensive liberty in presuming to interfere in a matter that concerns only General Garnet and myself. Of you, my old friend, I only say that your doubts and fears are totally groundless. General Garnet, perhaps, wishes to test the strength of my confidence in him, or he may have some other and still better reason for what he is about to do. At all events, when he lays that deed before me for signature, most willingly, most cheerfully, will I prove my love and respect, and confidence in him, by signing it at once. Judge Wylie, I am not well this evening. The events of the day have shaken me very much. Judge Wylie, with many thanks for your kind intentions, permit me to wish you good-evening." And Alice held out her hand.

Judge Wylie arose, saying:

"Ah! I knew it. I might have known it before I came. She will not be saved when she might be. She is like all her sex: none of them ever will be saved, unless it's those who aint worth saving. Well, good-evening, Mrs. Garnet! God be with you! It is said that children and—pardon me—fools—enjoy the privilege of an especial Providence. May such a protection be yours! Good-evening, madam."

And pressing her hand, he took his hat and stick, and was about to leave the room, when the front door was heard to open, steps to hurry up the hall, and the library door was thrown open, and General Garnet entered, ushering in a magistrate and a lawyer, who held some documents, tied with red tape, in his hands.

"Ah, Judge Wylie! I am glad to find you already here. Gentlemen, be seated. Alice, my love, I preferred

to bring these gentlemen here, for the purpose of transacting a little law business in which you are concerned, rather than risk your health by taking you out in this severe weather. Judge Wylie, resume your seat. Gentlemen, pray be seated. Alice, my love, come hither; I had expected to find the library empty, and you in your chamber, where I left you. I wish to have a word with you apart." And putting one arm affectionately over the shoulder of Alice, he took her hand, and led her away to a distant part of the room, where, with his most angelic smile, he said: "Alice, I am the nominal master of Mount Calm only! but, Alice, I am at this moment a poor man. Prove your affection and confidence now, as your heart dictates!"

"I know what you mean, Aaron. Come! I am ready to do so—at once. But, oh, Aaron! have you seen Elsie?"

"I will tell you all about that after this little business is over, dear Alice! Come."

"Immediately after?"

"Yes, instantly, and it will take but a moment."

"Come, then, let us have it over quickly, that I may the sooner hear of Elsie. But, oh! just assure me of this —that you have forgiven her! I know by your smile that you have—but, oh! I long to hear you say so!"

"Can you doubt me, Alice? Come! let us have this affair over, and then you shall know all about it."

And taking her hand he led her up the room.

The magistrate was seated behind a table; before him lay a copy of the Holy Scriptures, pen, ink, and paper, and certain documents, among which was the deed of assignment in question. By the side of the table stood Judge Jacky and the lawyer, as witnesses.

General Garnet led Alice up in front of it, and immediately before the magistrate.

Squire Fox took up the deed of assignment, and read it aloud. Then he administered the oath to Alice, and put the usual questions, as to whether she gave that deed of her own free will, without compulsion, or undue persuasion from her husband?

"Without being kissed or kicked out of it?" whispered Judge Jacky.

Having received satisfactory answers to all questions the magistrate laid the deed open before Alice, for her signature. General Garnet dipped a pen in ink and handed it to her. Alice received it, smilingly, and in a clear, unfaltering hand, wrote her name at the bottom of that deed, that conferred upon her husband immense wealth and left herself penniless.

The lawyer affixed his signature, as witness. Judge Wylie, with a deep groan, wrote his name. The squire performed his part, and the business was complete.

Alice looked up into General Garnet's face, with an expression that said—"Now have you proved me sufficiently? Now will you confide in me? Will you love me?"

General Garnet stooped down and whispered to her:

"Retire immediately to your chamber, Alice!"

"But—Elsie—tell me of her?"

"Retire to your chamber, instantly, Mrs. Garnet!—and await me there! I must offer these gentlemen something to drink, and dismiss them; immediately after which, I will come to you, and tell you all that I have done, and all that I intend to do!" said General Garnet, in a tone of authority and impatience, that would brook no opposition or delay.

And Alice, courtesying slightly to the party, withdrew.

CHAPTER XXV.

LIFE'S STORM AND SOUL'S SHELTER.

Go, when the hunter's hand hath wrung
From forest cave her shrieking young,
And calm the lonely lioness—
But chide not—mock not my distress.

—*Byron.*

ALICE retired to her chamber and waited restlessly. An hour passed, and still she heard no sound of departing guests. It was quite dark and she rang the bell.

Milly entered with lights.

"Tea is ready to go on the table, Miss Ally. Shall we put it up?"

"Where is your master? What is he doing?"

"He is in the library, ma'am, with the gentlemen. They don't seem to have any notion of going home. General Garnet—he sent for more wine, and ordered deviled turkey and scalloped crabs—two other gentlemen have come in, and they are all very high upon pullyticks."

Alice heard and sighed deeply.

"So I thought, Miss Ally, how you'd like your cup of tea, anyhow. Shall I set the table as usual? Though it will be very lonesome for you to sit at the table all alone, now that Miss Elsie is gone, and marster's engaged. Or else shall I bring you a cup of tea up here, with anything else you would like? There is some cold fowl in the pantry, and some neat's tongue, too; shall I bring it up to you, with a cup of tea?"

"No, Milly. Perhaps the general would like supper got for his guests. Come with me; I will go down and see."

"God bless your soul, Miss Ally, honey, they's been a stuffing ever since they's been here."

"No matter for that, Milly; you know our gentlemen have infinite gastronomic capacities."

"My Gor A'mighty, Miss Ally! you don't say so. Is it catching?"

"What?"

"That there complaint our gemmen has got."

"Nonsense, Milly! you misunderstood me; I meant to say that they had 'no bottoms to their stomachs.'"

"My Gor A'mighty! Miss Ally, what a misfortunate state to be in. It's a world's wonder as it don't kill 'em to death!"

"Pshaw, Milly! There is nothing the matter with them except that they never get done eating."

"Oh, is that it, Miss Ally? Well, indeed, I don't believe they ever does; especially when they is a talkin' pullyticks. 'Case, you see, Miss Ally, I done sent 'em

in four dozen scallop crabs and six dozen raw open Nanticoke oysters, each one of 'em as big as the palm of my hand, and two deviled turkeys, and bless patience if they didn't put all that away in less than an hour, and sent for more."

"Well, they will want a hot supper by and by, that is certain. So take the candle, Milly, and go before me. I am going down to the library door to speak to General Garnet."

Milly lifted the candlestick, and preceded her mistress down the stairs.

When she reached the library door Alice stepped before her and rapped.

General Garnet came to the door and opened it. On seeing his wife:

"Well, what do you want now? Didn't I direct you to keep your chamber until I came?" he inquired sternly.

"Yes; and I would have done so, but your visitors are staying longer than you or I supposed. Perhaps they will need supper; shall I order it?"

"No! Mind your own business. Don't go beyond your orders. Return to your room and wait me there," he said, and shut the door in her face.

Alice sighed, and turned from the door.

Milly was indignant. This was the first time she had ever positively witnessed any disrespect shown to her beloved mistress. And Milly boiled with rage.

"High! Who he? Mus' think how people 'fraid o' him. My Lor'! I only jes' wish how my ole man, Tom, 'ould turn a darned etarnal fool in his ole days, and talk to me so! that's all! 'High'! I say, 'Nigger, better hit somebody, hadn't you? Is you done tuk o' your ole woolly head's senses?' 'Deed I would. Look here, Miss Ally, honey! Don't you put up o' that there shortness. Now Miss Elsie's gone, he can't spite you any way. He daren't hit you. 'Case why? 'case the law protects you. Now, Miss Ally, I say, you take my 'vice. You jes' pluck up a sperit and turn on him. And put a 'stonishment on to him. Jes' you step it over him in style. Make him walk chalk. Ses you, 'Now, you behave your-

self, or I'll unmask you afore all the world, and let people see how pretty you are underneat of your smiles.' Lor', Miss Ally, if men aint the easiest spil't and a-made fools of, of all the dumb beasts as ever wore shoe leather. There's my old man, Tom. Why, anybody'd think he was the bestest old nigger as ever said prayers. But Lor'! when we first took up 'long o' each other, the cussed infunnally fool thought he was master; thought how he'd got a nigger of his own. Ugh—umph! I soon took him out o' that there. I wa'nt a-goin' to lay down on the ground and let people walk on me. Now he 'haves himself as a man ought to do. 'Twon't do, Miss Ally, 'deed it won't, Miss Ally! to spile men folks. Men folks 'quire to be made to know their places. 'Deed, 'fore my Heavenly Marster, they do, honey."

Doubtless Alice would have rebuked this freedom of speech, had she heard one word of it; but she did not. She only knew that Milly was twaddling some monotonous strain of monologue, as she carried the candle before her upstairs.

Arrived within her chamber Alice dismissed her maid, refusing all refreshment, and threw herself, exhausted and anxious, upon her bed.

As the hours passed slowly away, sounds of revelry from below stairs began to reach and disturb her. As time wore on toward midnight these orgies became louder and higher. Vociferous laughter, shouting songs and thundering cheers mingled in a strange wild discord, and broke startlingly upon the aristocratic repose of that mansion and the holy quiet of that night. Alice listened in fear and trembling and disgust, for such orgies were unprecedented there.

At length, long after midnight, the company broke up in great disorder. Alice listened shudderingly to their noisy leave-taking, as with jocular songs, coarse jests, vociferous cheers and laughter, they departed. Then she heard the closing of doors and windows, and the steps of General Garnet as he moved about the house. Lastly, she heard him coming up the stairs. He entered the chamber. Alice rose to meet him.

"Oh, you are waiting to hear something about Elsie. Well, sit down," said he, putting down the night lamp, closing the door, and turning to her with a sarcastic smile.

Alice had sunk into a chair, faint, sickened by the sight of the demon leer that now he did not even turn to conceal.

"Well, now, what questions do you want to put to me? I am quite ready to answer any," he said, dropping himself into a chair before her, crossing his feet, folding his arms, and leaning back.

"Elsie, then? Have you seen her?"

"No."

"What, not seen Elsie!" she repeated, with a look of deep disappointment. "Not seen Elsie?"

"No," he answered again, looking at her with steady, imperturbable contempt.

"But you—you intend to see her?" asked Alice, with a sinking voice.

"Never! Never, so help me Heaven! And now listen, minion! fool! It was for the purpose of punishing her and you—of beggaring her and you, that I obtained that deed!" he exclaimed, malice, scorn, taunting triumph writhing around his lips, flashing from his eyes, and lighting up the whole dark face with a lurid demoniac fire.

Alice stared at him for an instant with a marblelike immobility of countenance, as if it were impossible for her to comprehend such black treachery.

Stretching out his arm, and pointing his finger at her, he laughed aloud.

Then the spell of amazement that checked the current of her blood was broken, and slowly from the pallid lips came the words:

"Oh, my God! I understand it all now!"

"Ha! ha! ha! do you?"

"All—all," she continued, without withdrawing her steady gaze—"all, all. I have sold my birthright and hers, for—a kiss!"

"Ha! ha! ha! Well, what do you want to complain

of? You got the kiss," he exclaimed, in the most insulting manner.

"I have sold her birthright for a kiss! a serpent's kiss! a Judas kiss!" cried Alice, wildly wringing her hands.

"Come, Mrs. Garnet, no hard words, if you please. Remember how you hung upon me this morning. You were so affectionate! I was quite flattered; grew 'quite in favor with myself,' and almost with you—only it is impossible to rekindle ashes."

"Oh, fiend, fiend! remorseless fiend! I shall go mad! Oh, God! where sleep your thunderbolts?" cried Alice, rising, and walking distractedly up and down the floor.

"Come, madam. No more of this. I am tired of it. Resume your seat," exclaimed General Garnet, leaving his scornful, taunting manner, and speaking in the deep, stern tones of haughty command.

But Alice heard him not, as she walked wildly up and down the room, crying:

"Oh, God! God! where rest your thunderbolts?"

"Do you hear me? Sit down, I say! or, by Heaven, I will send you in search of the thunderbolts!"

But Alice was not to be stopped now. Still wildly walking up and down the floor, distractedly wringing her hands, she was pouring forth the gathered bitterness of many years.

"I have borne so much, great God. I have borne so much. Oh, I have been a woman 'of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' And who is it that has made my life, my harmless life, one long pain? You, General Garnet, you. You married me by force, you know you did. In my young girlhood—nay, in my innocent childhood, when life opened to me with such a bright promise of usefulness and happiness with one I loved, with one to whom my faith was plighted, you tore me away from that one, and made his life a useless, barren waste, and married me yourself, for your own selfish purposes, and nearly broke my heart and crazed my brain. God knows I have no clear recollection now of the months that followed my marriage. Well! Well! Well! 'Time and the hour beareth away all things,' and as time passed, I

learned to love you. Because you were my husband, and the father of my child, and because it was the great necessity of my nature to love, I loved you. God knows, I think there was no other reason. Oh, if Heaven gave me one idea purer and higher than all the rest, it was that of the beauty and holiness of marriage! And though mine was a miserable sacrifice, so great was my need to live in an atmosphere of love and piety, that I tried to make a sort of temple of it. It was a wild ruin. Oh, worse! it was a ridiculous failure! This hour has proved it. Ha! ha! ha! Hark! did I laugh? No, it was not I. I have nothing to laugh at in earnest, and I never laugh in scorn. But there are two spirits in me now, and one mocks at the other."

"Sit down, this moment, sit down!" thundered General Garnet, stamping furiously.

> "But heedless as the dead was she
> Of all around, above, beneath!"

Of all but the stormy outpouring of thought and feeling, from her own over-burdened heart and brain.

"When you trampled all my rights and my happiness beneath your feet, when you seized and married me against my will, I excused you, for I said you loved me with a strong passion, and strong passions have their necessities and their rights. When you required me to give up my dearest friends, and lay aside habits of study and elegant amusements, that were a second nature to me, I said that your position gave you a right to dictate to me, and I acquiesced without a murmur. When you took my little child away from me, the only comfort I had left in the world, and sent her across the ocean, to remain at school for many years, I said you were her father, and what you did was doubtless intended for her good, however mistaken the intention might be, and I submitted. Recently, when you have laid violent hands upon my person, and endangered my life, I said it was violence of temper, not malignity of heart, and I resolved, for your sake and mine, to keep our secret, and to bear with it. I excused it—nay, I went farther, and

vindicated it. No ill-usage, from mere violence of temper, could have affected my happiness. I do not know but that I thought you had a right to strike me if you were angry. Because I was superstitious and fanatical, and because I loved you then. They say that 'perfect love casteth out fear.' My love, imperfect as it was, cast out fear. When I conscientiously assisted at Elsie's marriage, and remained home here to meet you, I nerved my heart to bear all your fury. I even said it would be just, coming from you. And no matter how much I had suffered at your hands, no matter if you had left me for dead, as you did once before, if I had recovered I could have gone on cheerily with my daily duties, as if nothing had happened. Because I could have understood violence, as I said: I could have understood anything that grew out of heat of passion—anything, but this clear-headed, cold-blooded treachery—because I loved you then. Nay! My God! I believe in my soul, I love you yet, and it is that which stings my self-respect to madness. It is that which lays my soul open to the entrance of the scornful, jibing spirit that mocks at my holiest instincts."

"Sit down! Sit down, I say!" vociferated General Garnet, striding toward her.

Suddenly she fell at his feet, and raised her clasped hands, saying:

"I am mad! I am mad! Two spirits possess me—a mad and a sane one. It is the mad spirit that impels me to say now—while your serpent-treachery folds its cold, damp coils about my heart, and not so much stings as chills me to death—to say now, in the face of all reason—while the same spirit keeps before me—to say, only forgive Elsie! only be reconciled with her, and take all the rest; and I will try to forget that I have been deceived and scorned. At least I will never, never harbor the thought, much less give it expression again. Come, forgive your child! You cannot be forever obdurate to your child! Be reconciled to her, and I will believe that anger and disappointment bereft you of your reason—for a little while—and that it was only during a tempo-

rary fit of insanity that you could have done such a thing. And I will honor you again."

"Pooh! fudge! You are not so mad as to believe the words you are saying," said General Garnet, jerking her up and flinging her upon the sofa. "There, be quiet; I hate raving. And now listen to what I have to say in regard to Elsie: I will never see her, or speak to her, or receive a letter or a message from her, under any circumstances whatever, so long as I live. I will never permit you to see her, or speak to her, or hold any communication, by letter or message, with her, under any circumstances that may occur, so long as you live. I will never give her an acre of land, or a cent of money, or an article of food, or raiment, or fuel, to save her from starvation or freezing!"

Alice, exhausted, prostrate, gazed at him in horror, as with a darkened and ferocious countenance, and a voice of concentrated hatred, so deep as to be nearly inaudible, he continued:

"If she were to dare to set foot upon this plantation I would loosen my bloodhounds upon her!"

"Fiend—you are the only bloodhound that would hurt her. Turn them loose on her, then—do it! They would crouch at her feet! They would lick her hands—her beautiful hands—that have fed and caressed them all. Or get strange dogs to hunt her with, and even they would grovel before the angel in her eyes. Oh, fool!—you are the only brute on God's creation that would harm her," said Alice, in a low, deep tone.

General Garnet continued, as if he had not heard her:

"If she were lying, dying, at my gate I would not suffer one of my negroes to hand her a drink of water, if that drink of water would save her from death!"

"Demon—there is not a man, woman, or child on this plantation that you could hinder, with all your malice and power, from rendering Elsie any service she might require—unless you imprisoned them, or tied them hand and foot!" said Alice, in a dying voice.

Still he continued, without attending to her indignant

but faint interruptions. And his face became still more dark and demoniac.

"And now comes the very best part of the argument, which, like a good orator, I have saved for the very last—I wonder how you will like it! I shall take pleasure in watching the play of your pretty features while I tell you, and dissecting and analyzing the emotions of your heart as you hear! And saying within myself—there is so much regret, and there is so much shame, and there is so much jealousy, and there is so much rage. Listen, then—you have disappointed me in my first plan for uniting two great estates. Before I have done I will make you regret that. The estates shall be united yet. You have taught your daughter to disobey me. Very well; you have bereft her of her birthright for a caress, to your shame be it remembered—and I have discarded and disowned her. But, listen: I have another daughter—the child of my love—ha!—are you pale with jealousy? Listen, farther yet: all the broad lands of Mount Calm that came by you, and should descend to your child, and enrich her, will I bestow upon the child of my love; and her hand will I bestow upon Lionel Hardcastle, who will be glad to accept it, no doubt. Ha! Now die of rage!" he exclaimed, with a ferocious laugh.

But neither regret, shame, nor jealousy, nor rage, disfigured that peaceful face, or agitated that composed figure. General Garnet, who glanced at her first in triumph, now gazed in awe. Her eyes were closed, her hands had fallen. Her whole figure expressed perfect repose. She looked as if the Angel of Death had laid hand upon her head, and said to that storm-tossed life, "Peace—be still." "And there had fallen a Great Calm."

CHAPTER XXVI.

DAY AFTER THE WEDDING.

What is the world to them?
Its pomp, its pleasure, and its nonsense all?
Who in each other clasp whatever fair,
High fancy forms and lavish hearts can wish,
Or in the mind or mind-illumined face;
Truth, goodness, honor, harmony and love,
The richest bounty of indulgent Heaven!

—*Thompson.*

At break of day a large traveling wagon, strongly and compactly built, and neatly roofed with snow-white tent-cloth stretched lightly over hoops, and drawn by two stout gray mules, stood before the village hotel at Huttontown. This wagon was closely packed with a small assortment of cabin furniture. All this "household stuff" was perfectly new, clean, neat, and bright, and snugly stowed away in the back and middle part of the wagon. Near the front of the vehicle stood a small, flag-bottomed armchair, wedged tightly in between boxes and trunks, so that it could not be jostled by the motion of the wagon. It is needless to say that this was the "traveling carriage" of our bridal pair, or that the little flag-bottomed chair was provided for the especial convenience and comfort of the bride. Early as the hour was, a crowd of village neighbors had collected for the pleasure of seeing the "bride and groom" come out, and the wagon start "for the Western country." Among the assembled villagers was a fine, handsome boy of ten or twelve years of age, who volunteered to hold the reins until the travelers should come forth.

The people had not very long to wait. The front door of the hotel opened, and Dr. Hardcastle, clad in a large, shaggy overcoat and overalls, and fox-skin cap and gloves, and looking as great, energetic, and joyous as ever, came out, leading Elsie, wrapped in a full, brown cloth cloak, with her healthful, happy face blooming and

smiling from out the comfortable rolls of a wadded, brown silk hood.

Magnus nodded and smiled as he shook hands hastily right and left, and hurried Elsie toward the wagon. He lifted her in, fixed her comfortably in her chair, wrapped the ample folds of her cloak about her, and tucked it snugly around her feet, with a solicitious care for her and a total indifference to the eyes of the lookers-on that provoked their merriment into peals of good-humored laughter, accompanied by exclamations of: "That is right, doctor. Take good care of her, God bless her! That's right, doctor. That's the way. Tuck her up warm. Indeed, her chin will freeze, if you don't muffle that comforter closer around her throat."

"Oh, hurry! let's escape this!" whispered Elsie, laughing and blushing.

"Never mind, dear! Never mind their rough manners. You are too generous and large-hearted to feel anger or contempt at their unrefined method of expressing their sympathy, which is really more sincere and earnest than all the congratulations in elegant phrases that ladies and gentlemen give and receive upon such occasions. Let us have patience with uncultivated Nature, dear Elsie, for we are going to live with her a long time. At least, have any other feeling for humanity rather than contempt, dear Elsie," replied Magnus, as he finished arranging her cloak.

"Me! me presume to feel contempt for my rough, honest, kindly neighbors! Oh, Magnus, never! I will prove to you that I do not!" exclaimed Elsie, in a low, hurried voice.

Then Magnus sprang into his seat, and took the reins from the hands of the lad.

As he gave them up, the boy fixed a long, lingering, wistful look at the wagon and its occupants.

"You look as if you had half a mind to accompany us, my boy," said Dr. Hardcastle, as he read the expression of the lad's countenance.

"Oh, I have, sir! for I feel I could be useful, almost necessary to you, and beneficial to myself, if I could go;

but I cannot, for I have a little girl to take care of at home."

"A little girl to take care of? You!"

"Yes, sir, my little sister, or rather she is just like my little sister. We live on Hutton Island."

"Oh, yes! the two Children of the Isle. How come you over here so early, my boy?"

"I came over to bring some maninosies to the tavern, sir, in time for them to be prepared for breakfast. I expect you ate some of them yourself, sir."

"Yes, and they were very good."

"My sister and I gathered them, sir."

"Yes. Well, my boy, you look like a fine, independent, enterprising lad. Rely on God and yourself, improve your mind, be honest, industrious, and frugal, and you will make your own way in the world. What is your name?"

"Hugh Hutton, sir."

"Yes, young Hutton of the Isles, one of the 'Scotch lairds,' as the people used to call them for their pride and——"

"Poverty," calmly concluded the boy.

"Well, child, they go admirably together. Hold to your pride as long as you are poor, and cast it away when you become rich. Well, Hugh, I will not forget you, or lose sight of you. Some day I shall come back, and then you may return with me. Good-by," said Dr. Hardcastle, shaking hands with the boy.

Then he arose in his seat, lifted his cap, and waved farewell to the neighbors. Elsie kissed her hand to them several times, blushing brightly as they all waved their hats and handkerchiefs, and amid the cheers and benedictions of the little crowd the wagon started.

"We must make thirty miles to-day, dear Elsie, and reach Deep Dell by nightfall if possible," said Magnus.

"Oh, how I wish that fine boy were really with us. How useful he could be to you, and what a man you could make of him!" said she, looking back to where Hugh stood, the last of the crowd, watching the departing wagon.

"God has made a man of him already, dear Elsie. What a fine, independent look he has! Yes, I could have wished him to go with us; a very strong sympathy attracts me to that boy. I should be very proud of that boy."

"He will be gentle and great like you. He reminds me of what you were at his age, when you used to carry me about the forest in your arms, as joyous as a boy, yet as careful as a woman. I thought of that when he talked about his sister. Magnus, I used to feel as if I should so love to have a sister or to be a sister. There is such a sweet and tender thought in sisterhood—children of the same mother. Just now I thought that boy's voice took a tone of modulated sweetness when he spoke of his sister. Yet his very gentleness must be the playfulness of a lion's cub—there is such fire in his grand eyes, that reminded me of you, too. Oh, Magnus, do you know what I have been thinking of? what great music has been sounding its majestic harmony through my soul this morning as I journey by your side into the wilderness? Listen:

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share,
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye!
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.

And I feel as if you were that very incarnate spirit of Independence, and I am sure that that boy was the worshiping disciple who was ready to follow you. And as for me, Magnus," she continued, laughing, "there is such a superfluous amount of energy in my little body and soul this morning, that I feel as if I could not only brave and bear hardships and peril by your side, but should be disappointed if they did not come."

"You have so much resistance, Elsie! but do not do with your wealth of energy as the prodigal son did with his wealth of money, spend it all at the outset; and, as an illustration of what I mean, put your hands within your cloak, and fold it closely around your chest—we are about to turn and face a sharp, if not a violent northwester, and after the sun is fully up you will see that it

will blow harder," said Magnus, as they turned the end of the street and entered the turnpike road.

It was a glorious winter day; the sun now arose in cloudless splendor, lighting up the snow-clad hills and plains and ice-spangled forest trees and bushes into flashing, dazzling radiance, while far away behind them dashed and sparkled the green waters of the Chesapeake, like a sea of molten emeralds.

Their road, after leaving the village, lay over the snowy hills and plains, and through the forest around the base of Mount Calm. In making the circuit they once came in full view of the front of the mansion house, and Elsie, seizing her husband's arm, exclaimed:

"Magnus, tie your pocket handkerchief at the end of your stick, and get up and wave it. I know that our beloved mother has been watching at that window for the last hour to see us pass. I know it, though it is too distant to see her distinctly; yet I think I see somebody there. Wave it, Magnus, and then we'll know."

Dr. Hardcastle stood up, lifted the impromptu flag on high, and presently the signal was returned by a white cloth waved from the window, and instantly withdrawn.

"She saw us, she saw us, Magnus! But stay! why didn't she look out?"

"It would not have been safe on such a sharp morning as this for your mother to run her head out of the window in that bleak, exposed position," said Magnus, repressing the various vague forebodings of his heart.

"I am afraid something has happened to mother, Magnus. Oh! indeed, I feel as if something had," said Elsie anxiously.

"Nonsense, my love. I saw some of the gentlemen who were there last night until twelve, and who slept at the hotel, and one of them told me when I inquired, that all the family were well. However, Elsie, in driving around we will see some of the colored folks, and receive fresh assurance. Elsie, dear, it is solely on your mother's account that I do not turn into the grounds and drive up to the mansion house now, and make a last effort at reconciliation with your father. I know, Elsie, that it

would only subject her to a violent and perhaps fatal scene. I know, poor child, that it is a great trial to you to pass by your father's house, bound for a long journey, and a new, strange life, without stopping to ask his blessing. Oh! I know it, my poor Elsie! but keep your courage; this is the sharpest, and it is also the last trial you shall have."

"Oh, my courage is up," said Elsie, dashing the sparkling tears from her eyes, and smiling out like an April sun from the clouds. "These, father, are the very last tears I am going to shed. No, indeed, won't I weep, and make you sad for me, my dear Magnus! No, indeed, won't I, for anybody's cruelty and injustice!"

"Hush, hush, my darling! 'The heart grows bitter by saying bitter things,'" said Magnus, kissing the dewdrops from her rosy cheek.

"Gee up, Dobbin! Make them gee up, Magnus," said Elsie, poking at the mules with the point of her umbrella.

Magnus put whip to the animals, and they started afresh. Soon, in turning around toward the back of Mount Calm, they came to a group of negroes just starting to their work. Every man of them dropped his hat, and stood bowing, smiling, and grimacing at the sight of their young mistress. Magnus stopped the wagon.

"How are they all at the house, Uncle Bob?" he asked of the driver.

"All fus' rate, sir! 'Deed dey is, Miss Elsie, honey."

"Are you sure that mother is quite well, Bob?"

"'Deed, fus' rate, Miss Elsie! 'Deed is her, honey!"

"How do you know, Uncle Bob? You never go to the house."

"'Deed, honey, sister Milly told me; 'deed, honey, you needn't be 't all oneasy, nor likewise 'stress in your min' 'bout your ma! De madam is fus' rate—'deed her is. Der wa'n't nothin' of no fuss, nuther, honey!—eberyting passed off quite quiet. Marse Iron he had some company las' night, and 'joyed himself 'long o' de gemmen very much."

It is unnecessary to say that "Iron" was the negro corruption of Aaron, and not an unapt translation, either.

"And mother is well and cheerful?"

"High! what I tell you, Miss Elsie? Think I gwine to ax you a lie? De madam is fus' rate!"

"Thank Heaven, then! Here, Bob, here is a keepsake for you. It is a little prayer-book that I have carried in my pocket ever since I first left home for England. I held it in my hand when I was married, and I intended to carry it out West with me; but here, you shall have it. And, Bob, give my love to mother, and tell her that I am very happy—you hear, Bob?"

"Yes, miss."

"And give her this letter also, Bob," said Dr. Hardcastle, taking one ready sealed and directed from his pocket.

Then they took leave of the colored folks, shook hands with Uncle Bob, and started. Again Elsie called the driver back.

"Now, be sure to tell my dear mother that she must not have a thought or a care for me. Tell her I am very happy."

"Yes, Miss Elsie; yes, honey; I'll be sure to tell her—'deed, God A'mighty knows will I. Good-by! God bless you, Miss Elsie, and you, too, Marse Magnet! I wishes you both all the good luck in the worl'—'deed I does, children!—'deed, God A'mighty knows does I—I don't care what ole marse say!"

And Uncle Bob hurried off after his staff of workmen, leaving the wagon pursuing its way.

Suddenly, with one of his impetuous bursts of emotion, Magnus threw his arms around the form of his bride, and drew her to his bosom, exclaiming:

"Oh, Elsie! every now and then I realize, with a sort of quick, sharp, almost mortal pang of joy, that you really are my wife! Oh, Elsie, my love! my child! there lives not a being on earth so happy as I! There lives not a creature in heaven so happy as I!"

And she sank upon his bosom, pale, faint, with excess of joy. The reins were loosed, the mules came to a standstill on the decline of the hill, when Elsie, with one of her sudden, healthful rebounds from the bathos of

sentiment, sprang laughing up, and seizing the reins, exclaimed:

"Gee up, Dobbin! Magnus, why don't you make them gee up? We shall not make our thirty miles to-day."

Magnus took the reins from her hands, flourished the whip, and they set off in earnest, unmindful of a cynical old negro by the roadside, who, watching them as he bagged his snow-birds from the trap, said:

"The cussed infunnally young fools! I s'pose dey tink it always gwine be jes' so! Gor A'mighty help 'em! Aar, Lor'! der troubles is all afore 'em, like young bearses!"

And they went on, happy, hopeful, confident, and justly confident; recalling the past with its childish pleasures, planning for the future, pointing out to each other familiar places in the forest, and spots associated with some childish reminiscence—now it was the very tree where Magnus first took her to gather chestnuts; now the very dell where he set traps to catch snow-birds for her; now the thicket where the wild rose-bushes bore so full in spring; now the glade that was red with strawberries in May; and so, talking and laughing, hoping and believing, billing and cooing, our pair of turtle-doves pursued their Westerly flight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEEP DELL—COUNTRY TAVERN.

Here rustic statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
—*Goldsmith.*

It was far into the night when they reached Deep Dell, and put up at the large log tavern that fulfilled the manifold duties of country store, post office, smithy, meeting-house. and hotel, and was consequently a place of great

bustle, if not business. Here our emigrant pair, by special favor, were accommodated with the landlady's own parlor, and promised a private supper. The tavern was full of people, for this was mail day, and the post-boy from Huttontown was expected every moment.

Magnus went out to put his wagon under cover, and to feed and stable his mules.

And Elsie sat to employ his absence in writing a few lines to her mother, which she inclosed and directed to Mr. Wilson, the young Methodist minister.

She had scarcely concluded when supper, consisting of fine coffee and rich cream, buckwheat cakes, fresh butter, and venison steaks with currant jelly, was brought in and neatly arranged upon the table.

Magnus came in, and Elsie, with a blush and a smile, took her seat at the head of the board. This was the first time she had "done the honors of the table," and her half-womanly, half-childly heart was pleased at the novelty of her position.

As for Magnus, he was as gravely comfortable as if he had been used to his vis-a-vis all his life.

Very early the next morning the mules were fed and watered and put to the wagon, and a substantial breakfast prepared for our travelers.

But when Magnus went to the bar to pay his bill, the barkeeper, with the slow nonchalance of a country postmaster, handed him a letter, which he said had been brought by the Huttontown post-boy late the night previous. Magnus took the letter. It was superscribed in the handwriting of Mr. Wilson. He turned it to break it open, and found, to his dismay, that the seal was black. He tore it open. It was short, even abrupt in its announciation.

"HUTTONTOWN, December 18, 18—.

"DR. HARDCASTLE.

"MY DEAR FRIEND: I keep the post-boy waiting while I write to announce the painful intelligence of the death of Mrs. Garnet. She expired suddenly about two o'clock this morning—three hours before you left Huttontown,

although we did not receive the sad news of her decease until seven o'clock. The funeral is fixed for to-morrow afternoon at four. Return immediately, if you would be present to pay the last respects to the memory of the sainted dead. May Heaven grant that this season of awful and mutual bereavement may be sanctified to the hearts and souls of the father and daughter, of the father-in-law and the son-in-law, and that you may be all reconciled—each to the other, and all to God—is the prayer of

"Your brother in Christian love,

"EBENEZER WILSON."

"Why, why was not this letter given me last night?" exclaimed Dr. Hardcastle, in strong excitement.

"Because, sir, the mail did not get in until an hour after you had gone to bed."

"Have you any description of carriage here, lighter than my wagon? We must set off instantly, on our return to Huttontown."

"I hope there's no bad news, sir?"

"Yes—my wife's mother died yesterday."

"Good Heaven, sir; was the poor lady sick when you left?"

"No, no—it was unexpected—quite suddenly; we left her in perfect health. Is there any vehicle I can procure?"

"Why, sir—dear me, this is very shocking; I am very sorry to hear it. Yes, there's Mrs. Barber—her old carryall."

"Have my mules put to it on the instant," said Magnus; and pale with trouble, he went into the little breakfast parlor where Elsie sat at the head of the breakfast table awaiting. His grave demeanor, his troubled face, and the open letter with the broken black seal, alarmed her. Starting up in haste, she rushed to his side. He threw his arms around her, and placed the letter in her hand.

Elsie read the first lines. She was too strong and full of blood to faint, but the strength and sanguinity that kept her from falling under the sudden, tremendous blow

gave greater energy and passion to her grief. Breaking from her husband's arms, with a wild shriek she gave herself up to passionate lamentations and bitter self-reproaches.

"I should not have left her—I should not have left her! Oh! I see now, it was thoughtless—it was selfish—it was cruel to leave her! If I could scarcely bear my father's tyranny, how could she? How could she—so delicate, so sensitive! Died suddenly!—oh, yes, done to death—done to death! And to keep it secret for four or five hours—oh!"

"Elsie—dear, darling Elsie—hush! Do not say bitter and sinful things, which you will repent."

"Oh, don't put your arms around me, Magnus! It would be heinous for me to be loved, or comforted by your sympathy, now. I who left my gentle, fragile mother alone, to be done to death for me; my dove-like mother, in the claws of the vulture. I, who was so much stronger, and who, having your protection also, should have remained to protect her. I to leave her, defenseless, and in peril for my sake, and to come flaunting off, so happy and thoughtless, like a very matron. Oh, Magnus, I could go to a nunnery, Magnus—I could go to a nunnery, Magnus. A hundred serpents are gnawing at my heart! Oh, Magnus, I can never be happy—never make you happy in this world again. Oh, Magnus, I am sorry—so sorry for you, too! You did not deserve a sorrow-stricken, remorseful wife. Oh, mother, dear, gentle mother, what harm did your innocent life do to anyone, that it should have been trampled out?"

And then she burst into tears—such copious tears, such floods of tears, as only one of her strong and sanguine temperament could have shed.

Tears and lamentations are the natural vent of a healthful sorrow. It is only the sorrow unto death that is mute and dry.

And while she was drowned in tears, and wringing her hands, and wailing, and talking, Magnus walked up and down the floor, waiting as patiently as he would have waited for a storm of thunder, lightning, and rain

to subside, except when some unfilial expression of bitter indignation against her father would escape her lips, when he would go up to her, and gently risk to stop her.

"Dear Elsie, you must not speak so. Nothing that your father can do or say to me, or to others, can affect your duty toward him. Elsie, you must speak of your father with respect, or not speak of him at all. That is what your sainted mother would have advised, and, gentle as she was, enforced. There was nothing more admirable in Alice Garnet's blameless character and conduct than the delicate reserve with which she concealed her own sufferings, and the gentle dignity with which she constrained the respect of all her friends for General Garnet. I often compared her to the dove, folding her wing over her mortal wound, to hide it from all eyes."

"Blessed mother!—oh, angel mother!" said Elsie, bursting into fresh floods.

"She respected the husband in General Garnet—will you not respect the father?" at last said Magnus.

"Oh, yes—yes, I will, indeed! I will never say another word about him. If I do, stop me—don't let me, please, Magnus. I don't wish to do wrong; but, oh, Magnus, is it not enough to try one's faith—to kill one's faith—when one so good as my mother is permitted to suffer and to die?" exclaimed Elsie, giving way to another extravagant burst of sorrow.

Magnus knelt by her side, and took her hands, and stroked her hair, and wiped her tears, until the fresh gush of grief had spent itself, and then he said:

"Dear Elsie, it is the great strengthener and supporter of faith—the sufferings and premature death of the good. It makes immortality, heaven, certain, because necessary; and necessary, because just. Dear Elsie, what is the life and death of Christ intended to teach? What is the resurrection and ascension intended to insure?"

"I know—oh, I know she is an angel in heaven; but heaven itself needs 'familiarizing' to our feelings, before it can console us for the lost—much."

At this moment the barkeeper came in, and said that the carryall was ready. Dr. Hardcastle re-arranged the

cloak around his almost helpless companion, tied her hood, and leading her out, fixed her in the back of the carryall.

Three o'clock came, and they had still fifteen miles to go. The mules went in a fast trot. Four o'clock came, and ten miles lay before them. Five o'clock came; it was nearly dark, and they were still several miles from town. At length, at a little before six, when it was quite dark and piercing cold, they entered Huttontown.

Elsie had long in silence given up the hope of getting even to the church in time for the funeral service there; and now she whispered, in a low, solemn, sorrow-fraught tone:

"Drive to the church—to the house of the sexton. We must see her again, if only in the vault."

"It will be too much for you, oh, my Elsie!"

"No, no; I entreat, I implore you, take me to the vault."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VAULT.

Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power as yet upon thy beauty;
Thou art not conquered! Beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And Death's pale flag is not advanced there.

—*Shakspere.*

A SILENT drive of about half an hour's length brought them to the deep and sheltered forest dell in which St. John's Church stood. Surrounding the dell was the boundless forest, whose nearer trees stood up, stark and black, in strong contrast with the snow. Within the circle of these grim trees gleamed a single ray of red light, shooting in a line of crimson across the graveyard. This came from the window of the old sexton's log house, that stood just within the shelter of the forest. Taking this ghostly light as their guide, and picking their way

cautiously and reverently among the tombs, they approached the lone dwelling. As they drew near they saw the light flitting backward and forward in the house, and then perceived an old negro with a saddled mule at the gate.

Before Dr. Hardcastle could speak to ask a question the door of the house was opened, and the old sexton came forth, clad in a shaggy overcoat, fox-cap, and fur gloves, and carrying a lantern in his hand. Seeing two strangers, he made an exclamation of surly surprise, and asked their business. Dr. Hardcastle drew him apart, explained to him who they were, and what they wanted. The old man then changed his tone, invited them into his house, and, lantern in hand, slowly led the way. With plain kindness, he took the hand of Elsie, and led her to a rude armchair in the chimney corner, telling her that, being about to go away for the night, he had put out the fire, but that he would soon kindle it up again to warm her. Then going to an obscure corner of the room, he brought forth a quantity of oily pine knots, and lighting one at the candle in the lantern, and placing it on the hearth and piling other around it, and heaping more upon them, in an instant he had a very hot fire. Then he turned to Dr. Hardcastle, begging him to be seated, and explained that he had just been summoned away to Green Mills to see his brother, who was dangerously ill; that he had therefore to depart on the instant, lest he should not see his brother alive; that if Dr. Hardcastle would dispense with his services, and take the keys of the church and let himself in, he would be very much obliged; farther, that if Dr. Hardcastle should choose not to return to Huttontown in the severe cold, this poor cottage was at his service, with all it contained; only when the doctor left, would he please to put out the fire, and lock up everything, both at the church and at the cottage, securely, and put the bunch of keys under the stone by the doorstep. Dr. Hardcastle thanked him, accepted the keys, promised security to all things intrusted to his care, and even hastened to dismiss the old man. When the sexton and the negro had departed,

Magnus turned to Elsie, who had sat all this time in the armchair by the chimney corner, with her face covered by the flap of her cloak, and whispered:

"Elsie, my dear, dear girl, pause, think; do not insist upon going into the vault!"

"Oh, yes! yes, I entreat you; something in my heart urges me beyond the possibility of keeping back; haste! haste, I implore you. I am sick with impatience while you hesitate. I feel as if something momentous, something tremendous hung upon this instant of time; haste, haste!" she said.

"My darling, my poor darling, strong as you are, this has been too much for you; you are nervous, excited, flighty; but, come along; I can take care of you."

Elsie arose and took his arm, and solemnly and silently they passed out of the old sexton's house, and took their mournful way toward the church. Solemnly and silently they entered its portals, and, dimly lighted by the lantern, passed up its shadowy aisles—silently, but for the mournful echo of their footsteps. The door of the vault was situated at the side of the altar. Opening this door with reverential care, and still bearing the lantern, Magnus Hardcastle descended, followed by Elsie, pale with grief and awe, into its shadows. There is a depth of solemnity about the last resting-place of the dead which overwhelms the wildest sorrow with awe, and subdues it into deathlike stillness. Magnus and Elsie entered the vault with profound calmness. But here was only the darkness and repose of death. The vault, like the church, was new. Only two mortals—an aged man and an infant—had been placed there to rest, just before Alice Garnet fell asleep and was laid by their side. As the two mourning pilgrims entered, the light of the lantern partially revealed the new, gray stone walls, the white ground floor, and the three coffins. That of Alice was, of course, easily recognized. Reverently, mournfully, they approached and knelt by its side. With reverent hands Magnus raised the top of the outer case.

A glass-plate set in the lid of the coffin gave the features of the quiet face once more to the view of the

mourning son and daughter. There was the face, even as Elsie had seen it often in its natural sleep; only more serene than in slumber, for in her life the very sleep of Alice had seemed troubled or too deathlike. Was this repose deathlike? Was this death? Beautiful, strangely beautiful, was that heavenly face, in its deep repose, in its rapt repose, for there was a look of ecstasy in the countenance, in the elastic fullness of the muscles, in the faint color on the rounded cheeks, and the full and pouting lips. Was this death? Someone's reverence for the beautiful had left the amber ringlets straying from the close border of the cap, and now so lifelike looked the lovely face, and these ringlets seemed to tremble as with a trembling breath. Was this death? Was the suddenness with which life had left the clay the cause of this lifelike look? There are moments when the most rational have wild hopes, moments when the most habitually self-collected doubt the evidence of their own senses; it was thus in amaze that they gazed upon her countenance, seemingly instinct with life; with the freshness, and fullness, and bloom of life; the color seemed brightening upon her cheeks and lips with life; the eyelashes and the amber ringlets seemed quivering with life, and even as they gazed with amaze the view was obscured by a mist on the glass, and the beautiful countenance veiled from their eyes. Elsie spoke with a voice full of tears.

"Oh, Magnus! dear Magnus! wipe off the glass. Our breath, as we looked too close, has dulled it. I cannot see her angel face any longer for the mist upon the glass."

Magnus drew out his silk pocket-handkerchief and wiped the glass carefully.

"I cannot see her yet, Magnus. I cannot see her yet. Oh, I want to see her again, that that divine countenance may be indelibly fixed in my memory—oh-h-h!"

Magnus wiped the glass again very carefully, looked, wiped it a third time most carefully, and, taking up the lantern, threw its whole light upon the plate, rubbing it assiduously as he did so. Why did Dr. Hardcastle start

"As if the Archangel's trump he heard".

The new mist upon the glass was from within the coffin. To snatch a hunting-knife from his belt, to wrench open the coffin lid with one wrench of his strong hand and throw it off, to give her fresh air; to snatch her from the coffin to the warmth and shelter of his living arms and bosom; to turn to the thunder-stricken Elsie, and exclaim:

"Elsie, don't faint! Be strong, I command you! Your mother lives! she lives! She has been placed here in apparent death only; she must not recover to find herself in this dreadful place; to see these grave-clothes; to know what horrors have befallen her, lest reason be shocked forever from its seat. Give me your cloak, Elsie! Quick! quick! My God, don't faint, I abjure you; I'll never forgive you if you faint now. Your cloak, I say; your cloak, quick! to throw around this shroud, which she must not see."

Elsie, with pallid lips and dilated eyes, too amazed and doubtful of her own senses and sanity to receive the joyful truth, with mechanical promptitude threw off her cloak and handed it to Magnus.

"That's my brave girl; that's my pioneer wife!" he said, receiving the cloak, and folding it hastily yet carefully around the form he held in his arms, and pressing it closer to his bosom. "There, Elsie! Now, my little heroine, shade the lantern; quick, Elsie, lest she open her eyes and see the place we bear her from. Quick, Elsie! she is moving restlessly in my arms now, and her form is getting warm, thank Heaven! as warm almost as yours, my Elsie. There, now follow me closer behind, Elsie, my little soldier, and you may let the lantern shine as soon as we get out of the church."

And so, folding the form of Alice closer in his sustaining arms, closer to his sheltering bosom, and followed by Elsie, bearing the darkened lantern, he hurried up the stairs of the vault, down the aisle of the church, out of the great door, and across the graveyard toward the cottage of the sexton, never pausing in his speed until he reached the door of the cabin, which, without stopping to unlatch, he pushed open with a blow of his foot.

He bore her in, followed by Elsie with the lantern. The fire they had left there was still burning brightly, warming and lighting the whole room. In the upper end of the apartment stood a poor but neat and cleanly bed.

Toward this he hastened with the form of Alice. He turned down the cover, and, hastily divesting her of the heavy cloak, laid her in the bed and covered her warmly up. He stooped and looked at her with intense interest, then took her arm and felt her pulse. It was moderately full and quick. He gazed upon her face. The color was still brightening in her cheeks and lips; her eyelids were quivering as if about to fly open; her full, fresh lips were slightly apart, as if about to speak; she was moving gently, breathing softly, murmuring melodiously. He bent his ear to catch that low, musical murmur; low and musical as the faintest breath of the Æolian harp. The words of that strange melody were: "Oh, angels, let me go! I—only I of all the earth love him well enough to be the instrument of Christ for his redemption—I—only I of all the earth have faith in its possibility."

"Wandering, flighty, delirious," said Dr. Magnus, quietly dropping the wrist he had held, and rising and going toward Elsie. "Elsie, I dare not leave your mother for an instant now. Pick up your cloak, wrap yourself well in it, take the lantern and haste to the gate, where we left the carriage; take my medicine chest from the box, and bring it hither. Haste, Elsie, haste! Every second counts a year of life."

Mechanically as an automaton Elsie had obeyed his every direction. She looked unnatural with her pale face and great, dilated eyes. And she performed her part with the abstracted air and literal and mathematical precision of a sleep-walker. With this strange, absent air she went out, and after an absence of about fifteen minutes returned with the medicine chest.

Magnus heard her coming and left his patient for an instant to open the door and relieve her of her burden. But here another subject unexpectedly arrested his attention and claimed his care. As she gave the chest into

his hands she stared straight at him—straight through him and past him with such unconscious eyes that he grew alarmed for her. Setting down the medicine chest upon a bench, he took her hands and drew her up to the fire, and, laying his hand upon her shoulder, and looking straight in her eyes, he said cheerfully:

"Wake up, Elsie! Rouse yourself, my child! This is very awful, but not unnatural."

"Oh-h-h!" sighed Elsie, dropping into the armchair. "Oh-h-h! I know it is not unnatural, or uncommon, either, for loved ones to die, and hearts to be bereaved and broken; but, dear Magnus, I am afraid I am going crazy; I am afraid to tell you what I wildly imagined just now, what an extravagant fancy I took into my head."

"What was it, then?"

"Now, don't be too much astounded at my folly, dear Magnus, for I have been so grievously tried."

"What was it, then? Quick! I have no time for idle talk."

"Well, then, I fancied—oh-h-h! such a mad, frenzied fancy—that my beloved mother was alive again. Am I not going mad? I thought my dear mother was alive again!"

"And you know she is!" he exclaimed, dropping his hand upon her shoulder, with hearty, kindly roughness; "you know she is! Rouse yourself this moment, Elsie; I command you; collect your thoughts; remember where you are, and what has occurred. What sort of behavior is this? Have I been premature and too partial in ascribing to you strength of mind; courage, coolness, promptitude in emergency? Can I depend upon you in extremity? Come out of this amazement this instant, Elsie! Wake up, and make yourself useful; weakness is meanness. Be strong; strength is grandeur. Be heroic; strength is heroism. Make me proud to call you wife. Stand up, now; give me both your hands. Look me straight in the eyes, and let me see if I cannot infuse some sanity and strength into that amazed and fainting soul of yours."

Elsie placed the back of her hands against her brow,

while she slowly arose to her feet, and then, slowly throwing off her hands, as if to dispel an illusion, she said:

"There; the cloud has passed, Magnus; the weakness has left me; I will be worthy of you. What is it that I can do, Magnus?"

"There! I know you were not a poltroon; only a fatigued hero, Elsie. Come, one kiss, and then to work."

And he caught her to his bosom with an ardent clasp and fervent kiss, that inspired from his own rich and strong vitality all her life, and warmth, and energy, and activity that her weaker nature needed at this trying moment. Then he led her to the bedside of her mother, whispering as he did so:

"Now, my own heroic wife, no relapse into weakness."

"No, no, indeed, my strength; I will be worthy of you. Oh, Magnus, I think you have life enough to raise me from the dead, if I were to die. Oh, Magnus, I begin to realize now that she lives, and that I am blessed; blessed to the fullness of content," said Elsie, sinking upon her knees and raising her clasped hands and streaming eyes to heaven.

"Calmly, calmly, my Elsie," said Magnus, laying his hand gently on her head. "There, rise now, and sit beside your mother, and watch her, and listen for her words, that we may know the nature of her illusion, and not rudely shock it. She seems in a happy trance now—and her pulse is good, yet her state is so critical that her waking must be watched for."

"Hush-h-h! her lips move! she speaks!" said Elsie, bending over her. "Oh, mother! mother! darling mother! warm and living, restored to me! What shall I render Heaven in exchange for thee? Hush-h-h! she is saying something. Oh, Magnus, that look of quiet ecstasy has left her countenance, and the troubled, earthly look she used to wear has come again! What is the reason of it? oh, what is the reason of it? Oh, see how her brow contracts! how her lips quiver! Oh, see her hands fly together and clasp like vises! Oh, Magnus! Magnus! do something! She is going into a spasm."

"No, no, child; she is not. Natural life is coming again. Her mind is taking up the train of thoughts at the place where it was lost. Nothing can be done as yet, but to listen—yes, listen—she speaks again—hear!"

"Forgive Elsie—only forgive Elsie, and I will forget that I have been betrayed, and scorned, and trampled under foot. At least I will never, never speak of it," murmured Alice, in a heartbroken tone; and then her hands flew up, her eyes flew open, and she looked around in the full possession of all her faculties, which was evident from the surprise with which she glanced upon the strange scene.

Magnus and Elsie had drawn back, not to shock her with their sudden appearance.

Yes, catalepsy, epilepsy, apparent death—whatever the medical faculty in their wisdom might have pronounced the fit to be that had held her life spellbound for two days—was over, quite over, and she raised up in the full possession of all her senses.

"Where in the universe am I?" she asked, rising upon her elbow and looking around. "Has he turned me out of doors, really, and has one of the negroes taken me into a quarter during a fainting fit? Let me recollect. What happened after he threw me down? I remember nothing after that. 'Now, die of rage,' he said, and spurned me from him. Yes, that is the last link in memory's chain. I must have fainted after that; he must have thrust me out, and one of the poor negro women must have picked me up and brought me to her quarters, and here I have recovered. Oh, I wonder how long I have lain in this swoon?—not long. It was near daylight when I lost recollection. It is not quite daylight yet. Oh, I have not lain here long, perhaps not ten minutes. I wish someone would come. I want to warn them not to speak of this. It must not be talked of on the plantation. It must not get out among the neighbors. And never, never must Elsie hear of it—guess at it! God! God! save Elsie from this knowledge! Let her still respect her father. Let her still be happy in thinking of me in my home—'home'—my home. Alas! it is not my home any

longer! I do not own an interest there—not even a wife's interest in the homestead which I should have had, even had the estate come by General Garnet, for I have signed even that away—'all right, title, and interest.' Yet it is my home, if not my homestead, for it is my husband's place of permanent residence, and therefore my home. And I must go back to it. I must beg him to let me in. I must, no matter how I may be received. I must, even if his other daughter is there to insult me. I must, to spare Elsie the knowledge of this. Elsie must never know—must never suspect this." And Alice arose, and, sitting up straight in bed, prepared to throw the cover off and arise, when Elsie sprang forward and threw herself upon the bed, exclaiming, in heartbroken tones:

"Elsie does know it, darling mother. Elsie knows it all. God nor angels would suffer her to be kept in ignorance of it—of all the sufferings—of all the sacrifice that has made it her duty never to leave you nor forsake you again. And may Heaven forsake me, mother, the hour that ever I leave you again!"

"Oh, Elsie! good, but rash child, have you ventured to come back here? Oh, Elsie!" And Alice threw her arms around the neck of her daughter, and clasped her to her bosom, and both wept copiously.

At last—"Tell me what has happened, dearest child. I have no recollection of anything since my swoon," said Alice, in a faint voice, slipping from the embrace of Elsie.

"Mother, darling mother, won't you please to rest now, without asking any questions? You must be so weak," replied Elsie, laying her gently down, and arranging the cover over her.

"I feel weak, yet well, light, renewed; but I won't ask questions that will pain you to answer, dear child. I am almost certain of what has occurred. I swooned, and was picked up by one of the women and brought to this quarter, and she sent for you. Dear Elsie, I am afraid she alarmed you. Did Magnus come, too?"

"Yes, dearest Mrs. Garnet, I am here," said Dr. Hard-

castle, advancing to the bedside with a cordial in his hand.

Elsie raised her mother once more, and taking the restorative draught, placed it to her lips. Alice drank it, and then said:

"Magnus, Elsie, I am afraid they have told you a dreadful tale of what occurred to me after you left the house. Dearest, you must not believe all that you may have heard, and you must excuse the rest. You know negroes, especially negro women, will exaggerate. They do not intentionally transcend the truth, but their quick fancies and warm sympathies lead them into extravagance. General Garnet, in the temporary insanity of rage, has done something violent, no doubt; but not so violent as has appeared to you, and no doubt he regrets his anger now. Elsie, do not think too hardly of your father. Give him time. All will come right at last. In the meanwhile, darling, I must return to the house. I must not seem inclined to make the most of his anger by absenting myself. Dearest Elsie, this morning we must part again. We will take breakfast together in this humble quarter, and then we must part, dear child, until better times. You must go with your husband, Elsie, and I must return to mine," said Alice, lifting up her arms and embracing her child.

Elsie looked at Magnus in despair. He stooped, and said:

"Dear Mrs. Garnet, you must sleep now. I am your physician as well as your son. You must be silent, close your eyes, and lie still."

"I cannot, Magnus. I do not feel the least inclined to sleep. I feel as though I had had a very long sleep. I feel quite fresh and renewed, though a little weak, as from want of nourishment. Besides, day is breaking. It is time to rise. This is the day you were to depart for the backwoods, and you intended to have made an early start. I cannot hinder you. I must rise. We must have one more social meal together, and then depart to our several duties." Alice spoke in a low, calm tone, but covered her face to conceal the quivering features.

Magnus seized the chance to draw Elsie aside, to whisper hurriedly in her ear:

"Elsie, she must know all about it. She is strong enough to bear the knowledge, and so it is perfectly safe to break it to her gently. In fact, to tell her the truth is the only safe plan. Her providential recovery from apparent death must not be made known to anyone for the present, or until General Garnet's secret disposition is ascertained and can be safely trusted. She has nothing to hope from him; she shall have nothing to fear. She must be perfectly secure from his persecutions and annoyances, until he is in a better frame of mind. This I think the safety of her life and of her reason demands. I consider that she is providentially dead to General Garnet and living to us. She must accompany us to the West. We must be en route within an hour, lest the old sexton returns and discovers all. Listen, I will go back to the church and restore everything there to such complete order that no suspicion shall be excited. And while I am gone, do you assist her to arise, if she wishes it. When she gets up and looks about her, she will see where she is, and that will greatly prepare her for my explanation. If she asks you any questions refer her to me alone for explanation. There, love, is the bundle of clothing you put up in your haste when about to leave Deep Dell. I brought it from the carriage just now, while you were talking with your mother. Get your double wrapper out, and slip it on her before the window-shutter is opened. I would not have her see that garb suddenly." And having given these hasty directions Magnus hurried out to the chapel, and having restored everything there to primal order, returned to the cottage. He found Alice sitting up by the fire with her hands clasped, and her head bowed with a look of deep thoughtfulness. Elsie had hung the tea-kettle on to make coffee, and had set the table, and was now handing out the contents of the old man's cupboard.

As Dr. Hardcastle entered, Alice, without raising her head, held out her hand to him, saying:

"Magnus, come here. Where am I?"

And Dr. Hardcastle went and drew a chair to her side, and took her hand, and slowly, and gently, and cautiously made known to her the events of the last two days. Alice made no comment.

The awful solemnity of the facts disclosed—the apparent death, the burial, veiled, softened as they were in the telling—overwhelmed her soul. She dropped her head upon her open hands, and neither moved nor spoke for a long time, or until Elsie came to her side, passed one arm earnestly over her shoulder, placed a cup of coffee at her lips with the other hand, bending her bright, loving face smilingly upon her the while. Then Alice lifted up her head, took the cup, and kissed the gentle hand that gave it.

While Alice drank the coffee Dr. Hardcastle went out and attended to his mules. When he returned they all gathered around the breakfast table. It was during that meal that he proposed to Alice the plan of accompanying them, urging upon her the strong necessity of her doing so.

Alice combated all his arguments as well as her instincts taught her.

Dr. Hardcastle avowed his intention of accompanying her back to Mount Calm, and, remaining in the neighborhood, in case of her perseverance in her present intention of returning. Alice sought to dissuade him from that plan.

Finally, after much talk, Alice agreed to accompany them on the first stage of their journey as far as Deep Dell, and remain there incognito, while he should return to Mount Calm, and ascertain the disposition of General Garnet, and, if possible and prudent, break gradually to him the fact of his wife's unexpected restoration to life.

Having agreed upon this plan Dr. Hardcastle made rapid preparations for the recommencement of their journey. They—he and Elsie—restored everything about the cottage to complete order; put out the fire, fastened up the cupboard, and the windows, and then the doors, and tying a little purse of money to the door-key,

by way of compensation for all they had used, hid it "under the stone by the doorstep," as requested, entered the carriage, and commenced their journey.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CHILDREN OF THE ISLE.

Their earliest steps have wandered from the green and fertile land,
Down where the clear blue ocean rolled, to pace the rugged strand,
They proudly flung the proffered bribe and gilded toy away,
To gather up the salt sea-weed, or dabble in the spray;
They shouted to the distant crew, or launched their mimic bark,
They met the morning freshness there, and lingered till the dark;
And still their souls are as they were, and as they e'er will be,
Loving and wild as what they love, the curbless, mighty sea.

—*Eliza Cook.*

THE little sea-girt homeland of Hutton's Isle had never recovered from the fatal devastation of the great tempest and flood. The fences had never been reconstructed strong and complete as before. The house had never been properly repaired. All the little mending and rebuilding that had been done had been the joint work of Miss Joe and her factotum, Pontius Pilate. And these slight repairs were of such a temporary character as to require renewal every few months. And every year the house sank and fell, and grew more ruinous and dilapidated. And every year the isle became more desolate and desert. Every season the soil was less productive and the crop poorer. The oyster banks had failed entirely. The fisheries were becoming precarious. Nothing remained in primeval abundance except in the flocks of water fowl that still flew in vast clouds over the isle, darkening the very air at certain times, like night or storm.

So much for the house and isle. Now for the inmates and inhabitants.

From having been always poor they were now upon the verge of penury—destitution. Miss Josephine Cotter, the good fairy of this sea-girt isle, was, to use her own expression, growing older and older every day of her life. She did not know, she said, which was most likely to topple down first, she or her old house.

The death of Pontius Pilate in the beginning of the winter, and a severe attack of rheumatism in her limbs, had seemed to be the climax of the poor old lady's misfortunes. It was immediately after the burial of Pontius Pilate that Miss Joe was sitting down in the depth of despair, with her apron thrown over her head, and her head bowed upon her knees, Hugh and Garnet suddenly stood before her.

"Don't cry any more, granny. I and Nettie can work the farm," said Hugh, in a cheerful, confident tone.

"You and Nettie work the farm!" replied Miss Joe, looking up with pity, anger, and contempt in the expression of her countenance and in the tone of her voice. To her, a woman past sixty, the boy of twelve and the girl of nine seemed yet infants. "You and Nettie work the farm!"

"Yes, granny, and haul the wood, and fish, and shoot——"

"Pah, pah! Hush talking, you make my head ache."

"Granny, I have sometimes taken the plow from Pont and plowed a row for fun. I know a little practice would make me perfect at that."

"Granny, Hugh can hoe up the hills, and I can drop corn. Hugh can cut wood, and I can fetch and carry it. And now, as there is no fish near the isle, Hugh can go out in the boat, and I can go with him to bait his hooks and look after the basket."

And do you guess all the hard and manifold work they did?

It was the dead of winter—the earth was frozen hard, and two feet deep with snow, crusted with ice. All the wood that was burned on the isle had to be cut and hauled from the forest behind Huttontown, and brought over to the isle in a boat. And the boy, with no imple-

ments but a hatchet, a small wheelbarrow, and a little rowboat, performed all that labor alone, until one day, when he had made very slow progress, and effected very little, he returned home, near frozen, from having been so long at work in the snow and among the ice-clad trees.

Then Nettie threw herself into a violent paroxysm of excitement, and vowed that she would go with him the next day to help him gather wood in the forest. And she went. And while Hugh cut the brush and the lighter branches of the dead trees Nettie would break them up and pile them in the wheelbarrow, enlivening the earnest, thoughtful boy all the time with her wild and joyous talk.

It was late in the afternoon of a stormy day near the end of December, that the two children, Hugh Hutton and Garnet Seabright, might have been seen wandering on the cold, bare, snow-clad northwest beach of Hutton's Isle.

Hugh was at this time a fine, handsome, athletic boy of twelve and a half years of age; tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, strong limbed, with the high Roman features, dark complexion, and commanding countenance of all his race; a noble boy, undisguised even by the old, worn, faded, and patched suit of homespun cloth in which he was clad. Bitterly cold as it was, his head and feet were bare—bare, because though Miss Joe might shear the sheep, and card and spin the wool, and knit him socks enough, yet shoes and hats cost a great deal more money than Miss Joe or Hugh could often get together, and so shoes and hats were luxuries and elegancies, only to be indulged in on Sundays and high holidays.

Garnet Seabright was now about ten years of age; a beautiful, brilliant, sun-burned, or rather sun-gilded brunette, whom the sea air and sun rays had made as hard, bright, dark, and resplendent as the burning, crimson, sea-coast gem whose name she bore. Child of Apollo and Amphytrite she was. Her eyes were large, dark, and burning bright; her rich and glossy hair seemed jet black in the shade, but emitted gleams of red

light wherever the sun shone upon it; her complexion was rich and glowing; she wore a dress of scarlet country cloth, with coarse shoes and stockings, and a coarse straw hat—and, altogether, her bright presence warmed and illumined the cold, bleak desolation of the sea-coast, like some cheerful fire. She followed close behind Hugh, stopping whenever he stopped, and digging with a little stick wherever the little round holes in the sand indicated the presence of the maninosies, left by the subsiding wind and ebbing tide upon the beach. Very necessary was it that they should fill their basket, for very little else had they at home for supper.

Their task was finished just as the clear, red winter's sun sank to a level with the horizon, lighting up all the bay like a sea of fire.

The boy and girl started for home with their baskets well laden with maninosies, and were gayly laughing around the fire, when Miss Joe held up her hand, exclaiming:

"Hush, I thought I heard a man's step."

"A man's step!" echoed Hugh, with a look of surprise.

"A man's step!" re-echoed Nettie, her eyes wide open with astonishment.

"Yes! A man's heavy step crunching through the snow. There, listen! there it is again. It seems to be coming up the hill toward the house—listen!"

They all listened.

Crunch, crunch, crunch came the heavy, regular, monotonous tramp.

And it is impossible to convey the effect of that regular, heavy sound breaking upon the profound stillness and solitude of night on that sea-girt isle.

"In the name of Heaven, who can it be?" exclaimed Miss Joe, as nearly frightened as ever she was in her life.

Crunch, crunch, crunch came the step, nearing the door.

"I am going to see," exclaimed Hugh, seizing up a pine knot, lighting it at the fire, and making for the door.

Miss Joe could scarcely repress a scream.

Nettie stood like a young panther at bay; clinging to Miss Joe in terror, yet looking toward the door with her eyes ablaze with defiance.

Just as a loud rap started them afresh Hugh swung the door open, and a tall, majestic-looking man, wrapped in a large cloak, strode into the room.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE NIGHT VISIT.

And scenes long past of joy and pain,
Come weldering through her childish brain.
—*Scott.*

"THAT'S godfather! As sure as a gun that's godfather!" exclaimed Nettie, making one bound from the place where she stood to a chair, and springing thence to the bosom of the newcomer, where she clung desperately, pressing her arms around his neck; holding his head between her hands, while she kissed his eyes and cheeks and lips; then rubbing and rooting her head into his bosom, and screaming with delight.

"And is it possible you recollect me, little Nettie?" asked General Garnet (for it was he), in a tone of voice almost sad.

"Recollect you, godfather; sure I do! Though you have been away so long; I haven't seen you since I was a wood-sprite, and that was a long time ago, and now I am a water-nymph," exclaimed Nettie, rubbing her head into him, and clinging around him, laughing with joy.

"Wild as ever, Nettie?"

"Wild, yes! You know when I was a wood-sprite I could climb trees like a squirrel; well, now, I am a sea-nymph—I can swim like a duck and dive like a fish—ask granny if I can't!" cried Nettie, reiterating all her exclamations of affection and delight, and repeating all her impetuous caresses.

"It seems to me that you love me a little, Nettie?" said he, in the same sad tone.

"Love you a little, godfather! Oh! just open your cloak and take me inside next to you. Oh! just unbutton your coat, and button me up inside of that, too. I love you well enough to let you swallow me, godfather," exclaimed the imp, nestling close to him with her arms about his neck, her head tucked into his bosom, and wriggling with delight.

"Yes, you do love me—disinterestedly—poor, forsaken child! And you are the only thing on earth that does love me," said he, folding both arms closely about her.

All this took place in a very few minutes, while Miss Joe was rising in her corner, setting aside her wheel, smoothing down her apron, and coming forward to meet her visitor, saying:

"Nettie, jump down this moment, and don't trouble the 'gentleman.'" But Nettie clung tighter, and General Garnet held her closer. "General Garnet, sir, it is an unexpected honor to see you here. Pray, come to the fire and sit down. Hugh, shut that door, and set a chair for the general, and throw more brush on the fire. General, do sit down, and don't let that wild child bother you so. Come down, Nettie, I say."

"I sha'n't, granny!"

"Never mind, Miss Joe, I like to have her here," said General Garnet, throwing off his cloak, seating himself in a large armchair at the fire, and seating Nettie on his knee. "Well, my old friend, how does fate use you nowadays?" he finally asked of the old lady.

"Oh, sir, very well, indeed; fust-rate, I thank you," answered proud Miss Joe.

"I am very glad to hear it," commented her visitor, with one arm still clasping Nettie, while he glanced sarcastically around the room.

Miss Joe did not perceive the irony, but she saw his suit of deep mourning, and suddenly recollected that she might be expected to say something appropriate to the occasion So, composing her countenance to funereal

solemnity, she looked at General Garnet, and said, very seriously, the following commonplace:

"We have heard of your heavy bereavement in the sudden death of your wife, General Garnet, and we are very much grieved. But you know, sir, death is the common lot of all. It is the only condition we can—can have life on. It's just as nat'ral as being born. And so, sir, I hope you'll be able to bear up under your fate like a philosopher. Besides which, it is the will of God. And being just so, I trust you will have grace to resign yourself to your trials like a Christian."

"I trust so, I trust so," replied General Garnet, speaking quickly; then he added: "It augments my sorrow very much, however, to remember that it was the misconduct of the daughter that precipitated the fate of the mother."

"Good Heaven! you don't say so, sir!"

"Yes! you may as well know the truth, my good old friend. Elsie threw herself entirely away; eloped and went off to the West with that worthless beggar, Hard-castle," said he, looking around to see the effect of his words.

Hugh's head sprang up with an expression of indignant astonishment, denial, and defiance on his fine countenance.

Nettie gazed at him—appalled.

Miss Joe stared, with mouth and eyes all open with wonder, exclaiming:

"Good gracious, sir, you don't tell me so. I heard something—but I didn't—I never—well, dear me—Lord a-mercy. Was it really that away, arter all?"

"Yes: and now my good friend, my excellent friend, let us change the subject; it is too painful; much too painful; even you can judge a father's and a husband's feelings must be upon such an occasion. Let us leave the agonizing topic, and never revert to it again. Let us turn to a more agreeable subject. My dear little god-daughter, here," said he, bending over the child on his knee with his soft, bright smile—a smile as charming as full, beautifully-curved lips, pearly teeth, and a dark

mustache, and the spirit of Belial could make it; "my dear little godchild here—she is a very fine little girl, and will one day, no doubt, make a very accomplished woman. You have taken good care of her; it is easy to see that. What rosy cheeks she has!"

"I have taken as good care of her as I could, sir—which being an old woman—too old to follow after children—wan't much."

"I am under great obligations to you, Miss Joe, and must find some way in which to repay you for the years of trouble and expense you have been put to upon account of my little ward."

"Not at all, sir; you owe me nothing," said the proud old lady. "I have always been a-t'iling, striving, saving soul; but I never saved anything, as I thought anyone near me, 'specially a little child, was a sufferin' for. No, General Garnet, ef I am to be paid at this hour of the day I had rather the Lord pay me. I don't want you to take it out'n his hands."

General Garnet, turning to little Nettie, again took her hand, looked at the beautifully-molded but sun-browned thing, and said, softly and smilingly:

"You have a very pretty-shaped hand, my dear little girl. You ought to take care of it. You ought to wear gloves."

"Haint got any, godfather."

"But you should get them or have them got for you. Why don't you?"

"Couldn't dig for maninosies or break brush with gloves on, godfather."

"Why, you don't do these shocking things?"

"Yes, indeedy! and I'm going coon hunting with Hugh next moonshiny night that comes."

"Next moonlight night that comes you will be in a very different looking place from this," said he, pushing the lurid black ringlets back gently behind her ears, and noticing for the first time that sure index of "gentle blood" in human kind or horses—the small and elegantly formed ear.

"Where shall I be, godfather?"

"Never mind where! They have not bored your ears, Nettie!"

"No; I haven't had my ears bored, but I saw a picture of an Indian with his nose bored."

"Pooh—yet, after all, one is about as barbarous as the other, little Nettie. Nettie, my little girl, would you like to go home and live with me?"

"Go home and live 'long o' you! Um-m-m-me—no! I had rather you'd come and live 'long o' me."

"Why?"

"'Cause I don't want to leave granny; she wouldn't have anybody to hug her up and keep her back warm at night."

"But if we were to take granny with us, too?"

"Um-m—me. Could you take Hugh along, too?" asked the child, with the astute air of one making a shrewd bargain.

"No," very decidedly answered General Garnet; adding, in a lower tone, "No more childish friendships ripening into mature love."

"Very well, then, godfather, if you love me, you'll have to come and live 'long of us; for I can't go home 'long o' you."

"Why not, pray?"

"'Cause, godfather, how could Hugh live here by himself?"

"Well, little 'Martha,' anxious and troubled about many things, Hugh need not live here by himself. Suppose I was to get a situation for Hugh?"

"A what?"

"Suppose I were to put Hugh in the way of getting an honest living?"

"La, godfather, no white men about here except niggers ever get an honest living, and I can't let you black Hugh's face and crisp his hair—that's black enough already—and make a nigger of him!"

"You silly child, you will let me make a lawyer, or a doctor, or a parson of him, won't you?"

Before Nettie could answer Hugh Hutton came up, cap in hand, and stood facing General Garnet.

"Well, my boy?" said the latter.

"General Garnet, if you have any notion of taking Nettie away from here, just look out for her and the old lady, who has had the care of her so long, and never mind me. I can take care of myself. Nettie, darlin', never stop for me; I know what to do with myself. And now, general, as long as I am talking to you, I must tell you I don't believe one word about Dr. Hardcastle's being a worthless man, because I know he is a good and great man; nor do I believe one word of Miss Elsie's breaking her mother's heart, because—because I know she is as good as she is beautiful. You needn't be angry. I should have hated myself if I hadn't spoke out!" exclaimed the boy, his frank, brave spirit flashing boldly from his eyes.

But the words had scarcely left the lips of Hugh before Nettie had jumped to her feet, and administered a sound box on the ear to him, exclaiming:

"Now! take that! Now, you make godfather out to be a story-teller again!" And having given her sharp little lesson, Nettie sprung back to her seat, and threw her arms again around his neck. General Garnet, without seeming to have seen her action, regarded the boy with a sort of gentle, dignified surprise and leisurely scorn, merely saying:

"Why, you impertinent young dog!"

Nettie sprang down a second time. General Garnet gently attempted to restrain her, but she dashed his hands away, exclaiming:

"Let me alone, godfather. You are wicked and ugly, and I hate you. He's not an impudent young dog at all! he is my dear, gentle brother Hugh," she said, throwing herself about the neck of the boy, who folded his arms around her.

"You must please to excuse Nettie, sir; indeed she is the wildest, queerest child that ever was born. But then, you know, she was wild and queer before ever I took her in hand," said Miss Joe, who was all this time busy with a saucepan over the fire; and a pitcher, a bowl, and some eggs, sugar, and spices on a chair by her side.

"Nettie seems to have very little self-control or any other sort of control," dryly observed the general.

"Now if you aint mad long o' granny. Just as if it was her fault. And she making you mulled cider, too, to keep the cold out of your stomach. And taking the top-knot hen's eggs, too, that she was saving to set, because they're a first-rate breed of hens, that lay eggs all the winter, and she wants more of them. And she had but six eggs, and now she's taken three to make you mulled cider to keep the cold from striking to your stomach; and you to get mad long o' her, and cut her up short for nothing. Never mind him, granny. I'll speak right up for you, and take your part," said Nettie, with her arms still clasped around Hugh's neck, looking at her guardian, who was regarding her with a smile of mingled amusement and condescending toleration.

"Don't you mind her, sir. Eggs aint no scarcity in this house; no, nor anything else you could want. Would you like the leg of a cold turkey, broiled, with a little currant jelly, sir? Or a few queen-cakes, with a glass of good old sherry?"

"Why, granny, I thought you hadn't——" began Nettie, but Hugh put his hand over her lip and whispered:

"Don't talk too much, Nettie. Go make friends with your guardian."

Nettie turned, saw once more the tolerant, indulgent smile that was beaming upon her, and, with her usual way of assimilating only the good and the beauty of a mixed thing, sprang at once to his arms, to his neck, and caressing him vehemently, asked:

"You are not mad with me, are you, godfather? I love you dearly! dearly! 'Deed I do, godfather!" And turning around his bushy face between her little hands, she kissed him many times, repeating her question: "You are not mad 'long o' me, are you, godfather?"

"No, darling little Nettie, I am not."

I have often thought that the spell of power that child held over that man's hard, stern, reserved nature was this: The blending of passionate fondness with perfect

freedom, frankness, and fearlessness in her feelings and her manners toward him.

General Garnet then turned, and, addressing himself seriously to the old lady, informed her that he thought the time had come for him to discharge the great obligation under which he lay to his worthy deceased friend, the late gallant Corporal Seabright, and redeem the promise made to his widow when dying by taking care of the rearing, education, and future fortunes of their orphan girl. That it was now expedient that his dear little goddaughter and ward should be brought into proper restraint and training; that, in order that this should be fittingly accomplished, it was necessary that his sweet little ward should become an inmate of his house, and live under his immediate protection and supervision; that, being most unhappily a widower, and having no lady at the head of his establishment to look after his household, and do the honors, he should be under the necessity of engaging the services of some highly respectable matron as housekeeper; that he thought no more competent person for the duties of the position could be found in the world than Miss Josephine Cotter, and, under all the circumstances, no one could be found to fill the situation with such perfect propriety; that if she chose to exchange her lodge on the isle for the housekeeper's rooms at Mount Calm, she might name her own salary, and he would come up to it or exceed it.

Miss Joe's eyes twinkled under her iron-bound spectacles, but she hesitated to answer.

General Garnet gave her full time to digest his proposition, while he toyed with the child upon his knee—telling her of her new home and new prospects, as far as he thought she could comprehend them; promising her new dresses, books, playthings, a pony, etc. Finally, he raised his head and turned to Miss Joe, saying:

"Well, madam, have you reflected upon my proposition, and what do you think of it?"

Miss Joe hemmed, cleared her throat, blew her nose, wiped the tears from her eyes, rubbed her specs and replaced them, and then said:

She didn't know. She was used to staying where she was. She had lived there twenty odd years, and did not feel like leaving it at her time of life. Besides, she must see what could be done for Hugh. She must take time to consider. She couldn't give an answer no way till next day.

General Garnet acceded to the short delay, and, smiling to himself, arose to take leave; tasted and praised Miss Joe's mulled cider; kissed and fondly embraced little Nettie; nodded to Hugh Hutton; shook hands with Miss Joe, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NETTIE IN THE MANSION.

She shall dwell in lordly houses, with gardens all about,
And servants to attend her when she goes in and out;
She'll have music for the hearing, and pictures for the eye,
And exquisite and costly things each sense to gratify.
—*Howitt.*

VERY early on the morning of the 2d of January, while yet the level rays of the newly-risen sun were projecting golden lines of light aslant the snow-covered earth, the traveling carriage of General Garnet passed through Huttontown on its way to the beach to take in Miss Joe and little Nettie, who were that day to leave their island home.

At the same hour Miss Joe was bustling over her last preparations at the isle. The simple furniture was to be safely stowed away and left in the house; the most valuable portion of their personal effects was to be transported to Mount Calm at more leisure; her own and Nettie's clothing was packed into a chest ready to be taken away.

Hugh's bundle was made up and slung at the end of a stick across his shoulder. The boy certainly looked the most hopeful and happy of the three.

"Dear Hugh, you do just 'mind me of Jack in the fairy

tale, going to seek his fortune," said Nettie, gazing at him with admiration.

Nettie herself was wild with joy and expectation. Scarcely had she slept or ate since the noted visit of her godfather. How could she? All the fairy tales she had ever read in her life were about to be realized in her own person; she was Cinderella, going in splendid style to the royal palace, to be married to the king's son; she was Beauty, who had just discovered the Beast to be a handsome, powerful prince, who was going to make a princess of her; or, if not literally so, her dreams were equally fanciful and extravagant. But how different was the reality, poor Nettie! more fairy-favored as wood-sprite in the forest wild, or water-nymph in her sea-girt isle than ever as heiress of the millionaire in the cold magnificence of Mount Calm.

The last thing Miss Joe did was to put out the fire and dress Nettie in a little cloak of scarlet country cloth, made with a hood to go over her head.

At which Nettie, with many extravagant capers, declared herself to be Little Red Riding Hood in person.

When all was done and the house locked up, the three took their way down the solitary footpath through the snow to the water's edge.

Hugh had already cleaned out the boat, and they all got into it. Hugh took the oar. The water was very smooth, the current in their favor, and in twenty minutes the boy landed his charge safely upon the beach.

The carriage of General Garnet was in waiting.

Miss Joe and Nettie were handed in by Hugh, and then the boy put in his hand to bid them a sorrowful good-by.

Miss Joe burst into tears, sobbed aloud, told Hugh if he should not find his place as shop-boy at Mr. Fig's grocery pleasant to let her know and she would go right back to Hutton's Isle, and they two would work together and see better times when the warm weather should come.

Nettie, for her part, much as she loved Hugh, could not cry She had read too many fairy tales not to know

how her own ought to end; and so Nettie felt perfectly assured that by some dénouement at Mount Calm every wish of her heart must be accomplished, most especially the dearest wish of all, that of having her playmate always with her. So they took leave. Hugh struck into a by-path, and walked off briskly toward the store of Mr. Fig. And the carriage rolled on up through the main street of the village and out over the country road that led over the snow-covered hills and through the hollow to Mount Calm.

Arrived at Mount Calm they were met by General Garnet, who, receiving little Nettie in his arms, pressed her fondly and carried her into the house, followed by Miss Joe. Here, in the hall, he delivered the little girl to the charge of a neatly-dressed "ladylike" mulatto girl with a gray Madras turban on her head and a pair of heavy gold hoops in her ears, telling her to take Miss Seabright to the chamber lately occupied by Miss Garnet, and to prepare her for the breakfast-table.

"And what's your name?" asked Nettie, looking up with curiosity at the gay mulatto.

"Nettie, my darling, she is Hero, your maid," said General Garnet.

Hero took the hand of the child and was about to lead her up the great staircase, when Nettie suddenly broke from her, and, exclaiming, interrogatively: "This way?" sprang up the stairs like a squirrel.

Hero tripped after her, overtook her on the landing, and gently took her hand, saying:

"Miss Seabright, young ladies oughtn't to romp through a quiet house, and race upstairs in that manner."

"I know young ladies oughtn't to, but I am a little gal."

"You are a little lady, and should act like one. But here is your chamber, Miss Seabright," said Hero, opening the door of Elsie's beautiful room.

"Oh, how—how grand!" exclaimed Nettie, breaking from her maid, springing into the midst of the apartment, and standing gazing, speechless with admiration upon

the splendor—for such they were to her—of the furniture.

The French paper on the walls, with its pretty pattern of wild-rose vines climbing up gilded pillars and forming into arches; the carpet on the floor, chosen to match, with wild rose vines running over a white ground; the pink damask and white muslin curtains of the windows, that suffused the whole chamber with a soft, roseate light; the rosewood dressing bureau standing between these two windows, with its tall mirror and marble top, and elegant ornaments of porcelain, pearl and gold; the rosewood bedstead, standing in the opposite recess, with its white-embossed counterpane, and rich valance, all softly shaded by hanging curtains of pink damask, like those of the windows; the wardrobe, with its mirror doors, occupying the side to the left of the chimney; the marble-top table, with its elegant trifles—a work-box of mother-of-pearl and gold, a standish of ebony, inlaid with ivory, a portfolio, books, etc.; the work-stand of satin-wood; the luxurious sofa, chair, and ottoman, covered with rose-colored cut velvet to suit the draperies; the polished steel grate; with its silver mounting, and marble mantelpiece, with its ormolu clock, vases, statuettes, medallions, etc.; lastly, the paintings, few, but admirable, though attractive to Nettie chiefly upon account of the massive and richly-gilded frames.

Introducing Nettie into that elegant, luxurious chamber was like letting a monkey loose in a fancy-shop. For a moment she stood shading her eyes with her hand, as she would have done in looking upon a dazzling winter landscape, gazing transfixed with surprise; and then she ran hither and thither, seized this and that, upset an inkstand, seized a porcelain bottle by its stopper, letting the other part fall and break; knocked down an elegant dressing-case, splitting off its pearl corners, and spilling all its contents; jumping up into one of the beautiful chairs and standing on it; snatched a statuette of Thalia from the mantelpiece, and, calling it a doll-baby, declared she would make it a red petticoat and give it the name of Dolly.

All this was the work of a minute, for then Hero went and took her hand again, and said:

"Come, Miss Seabright, all these pretty things are yours, but you must learn to handle them carefully, so as not to break and destroy them. Come, now, I have to get you ready for breakfast. You are to eat breakfast with the general. Come, let me wash your face and comb your hair."

"No, indeed, you aint a-goin' to wash my face and comb my hair. I've washed my own face and combed my own hair ever since I can remember, and I aint a-goin' to let anybody else do it now."

"Well, then, you do it; and here is such a pretty blue dress of princess cloth, all trimmed with black braid; and here is a black silk apron and a nice lace tucker, and silk mits, and a tortoise-shell long comb to keep your curls back, and here is a pair of black morocco boots, see!"

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed the child admiringly, as she hastened with her ablutions.

When Nettie was arrayed in her new dress she scarcely permitted her maid to tie the last thing, or turn the last long ringlet behind the comb, before she sprang from under her hands and fled downstairs to "show godfather and granny how she looked dressed like a lady."

As Nettie sprang into the presence of her guardian he arose and walked toward her, took her hand gently, and told her that little girls must walk and not jump and skip through the rooms of a house. Then he led her into the breakfast room, where Miss Joe was already installed at the head of the table, attended by a "genteel" waiter. General Garnet seated his ward and took his own place. Hero now made her appearance and stood by her little mistress. But Nettie's eyes were wandering from the elegancies of the breakfast-table, with its damask tablecloth, fine napkins, Sevres china service, etc., to the superb sideboard, with its splendid array of cut-glass and silver plate; and from the rich Turkey carpet to the wonderful paper hangings of the walls that showed the city of Paris by morning light. And Nettie's maid

had several times to remind her that little ladies did not stare about, but ate their breakfast prettily, before she could withdraw her attention from the new glories around her and fix it upon her breakfast.

But before the meal was half over Nettie had sprung up and bounded out of the room in search of more novelties. The hall, the library and the picture-gallery, the parlor and the drawing room, the saloon and the conservatory—all on the first floor—were in turn invaded and overhauled by the eager, impetuous child. Then all the chambers on the second floor were visited and ransacked. And then the indefatigable little explorer made for the attic, and beseiged the doors of the locked-up rooms there. Through all these runnings and ramblings Hero followed her, telling her that little ladies should not do this, or that, or the other.

When night came, a little tired with her incessant running, and a little fretted and dispirited with the ceaseless accompaniment of her maid's tuitions and fault-finding, Nettie went into the library, where her guardian sat luxuriating in his easy-chair at a table covered with books and papers before a fine fire.

Nettie was too tired to notice the elegant and luxurious appointments of General Garnet's favorite retreat; the superb book-cases at intervals along the walls; the rare and costly statues, busts, and oil-paintings; the tables laden with prints and articles of virtu; the easy-chairs, sofas, and foot-cushions; the deep, soft carpet, "stealing all noises from the feet"; the heavy damask curtains, excluding all cold air, and the splendid chandeliers pendant from the ceiling and diffusing through their stained glass shades a rich, warm, and glowing light throughout the apartment. Nettie sauntered straight up to General Garnet, climbed upon his knees, and threw her head and arms languidly upon his bosom.

"Tired, my little Nettie?"

"Oh, very tired, godfather, indeed. Take me in your arms and rock me back and forward, as Hugh does."

"You must forget Hugh and the isle, and the lodge, and all your infantile life, little Nettie. You are going

to be a young lady, and some day you may feel mortified if anyone reminded you of these things."

"But I think it would be wicked to forget them, godfather, and indeed I won't forget them, either," said Nettie, lifting herself from her resting-place.

General Garnet saw his error. If he wished Nettie to forget her past life, companions, and occupations, he must never remind her of them. If she spoke of them, he must not keep her mind fixed upon the subject even by opposing it. He must draw her attention to something else. Reaching out his hand, drawing a book of colored prints up before him, and opening it, he said:

"You have a great deal of curiosity, little Nettie. Here are views taken on the Mediterranean; pictures of strange places and old cities, which I will tell you about. But as I do not wish to talk to a listless hearer, you must first tell me when you see a picture that interests you, and question me about anything that excites your curiosity, and then I shall know that I am speaking to an attentive pupil."

Nettie kissed her guardian rapturously, and, still sitting on his knees, bent forward and eagerly turned over the leaves of the folio, until a view on the coast of Greece arrested her attention, and, pausing upon it, she caressed her guardian and claimed the explanation. General Garnet was absorbed in the description and history of this plate, and Nettie was listening eagerly, when the front door-bell was heard to ring. General Garnet ceased talking, and raised his head and listened. Nettie pressed her lips to his and listened, too. The library door opened; a servant entered, and announced:

"Dr. Hardcastle!"

"Show Dr. Hardcastle in," said General Garnet, gathering Nettie closely to his bosom with one arm, resting the other hand upon the table, and elevating his head and Roman nose to the loftiest angle of scorn. A minute passed, and then the door opened again, and Magnus Hardcastle, still clothed in his rough emigrant suit, entered the library, walked down its length, and stood face to face with General Garnet.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE INTERVIEW.

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my hearth and me
Hold her from this forever!

—*Shakspere.*

THUS they stood:

General Garnet had arisen and put Nettie from his bosom, but she stood upon the chair he had just vacated, with her arms around his neck, gazing at the newcomer.

Dr. Hardcastle stood, cap in hand, immediately before him.

They looked at each other. The countenance of General Garnet was calm and impassable; he could afford to be calm; he had his revenge in his hand—in his arms! The countenance of Magnus was frank, open, eager as ever, yet tempered with a certain gravity and earnestness of expression.

But a single instant they thus regarded each other, and then:

"Well, sir?" said General Garnet.

Magnus held forth his hand, saying seriously:

"General Garnet, I have come a day's journey back from my Western road to offer you my hand in amity, to say to you how kindly I feel, and must ever feel, toward the father of my beloved wife—to say how much I desire your friendship—how much we all desire a reconciliation. Will you take my hand?" General Garnet drew himself up and remained silent. Nettie, with her arms still around his neck, gazed with interest at their visitor. Magnus dropped his hand, but continued: "Sir, I can understand the resentment of disappointed ambition. But I do not, and will not, believe such anger to be implacable; not now—not under the afflicting dispensation of your recent deplorable bereavement. General Garnet, I had proceeded a day and night upon my

westward journey before I received a letter from Mr. Wilson announcing the sudden death of Mrs. Garnet. My dear wife was overwhelmed with sorrow, a sorrow which I also deeply felt. She reproached herself bitterly with a thousand fancied sins against her lost mother, vowing in her remorse and despair what she would give, or do, could the grave but give up its dead. 'The grave is inexorable!' General Garnet, to some extent I have judged your heart by hers. The husband and the daughter have a common sorrow. The husband must have suffered as much as the daughter. General Garnet, can I venture to speak candidly to you? Can I venture to say that, little as your Alice may have been loved or valued while she was still by your side, in your daily path, yet now that she has vanished from your sight you miss her in a thousand endearing attentions—in a thousand gentle ministrations every moment of your life. You miss her in countless comforts, and nameless refinements of comfort, of which she, till lost, was the quiet, unsuspecting origin. And now you find out the cause by missing the effect!"

"'How blessings brighten as they take their flight!'" said General Garnet, in a low, ironical tone, filling up the pause made by Magnus. But, without observing the sneer, Dr. Hardcastle replied, gravely and sweetly:

"Yes! 'We know not that an angel had been with us till we saw the glory of her vanishing wing!' In your deep heart, was it not thus with you, General Garnet? Is is not so in a modified way with many of us? Oh, the loved and lost! we may have misapprehended, undervalued, misused them in life; but let the inexorable hand of Death be laid upon them, and how changed are all our feelings toward them! How remorsefully we appreciate their worth; how despairingly we love them. What would we not sacrifice to restore motion, warmth, consciousness to that still, cold heart, so we might press it beating to our bosom; to restore light to those folded eyes, so we might gaze into them all the remorse, all the love we feel, but cannot speak; to restore life to the dead, that we might see them again at our fireside or table in

the old, familiar dress, with the old, familiar look; that we might be a saint or a slave to them thenceforth for ever! Take a closer case; take that of your Alice. Could now the doors of that vault where you laid her fly open and yield up its beautiful dead—or, to leave the supernatural and impossible out of the question, could Alice be found to have been laid there during a fit of epilepsy, as has sometimes been the case with others, and could she now be restored to you living, loving, would you not rejoice as you never rejoiced before—would you not love and value her as you never loved or valued her before—would you not do anything on earth to render her renewed life happy?" Magnus paused again to see the effect of this hint of the truth, thinking, also, that in the event of General Garnet remaining obdurate, he had possibly verged too nearly upon a disclosure.

But the stern, immovable countenance of the latter betrayed no emotion, either of suspicion or of relenting. It positively gave no clew to his thoughts or feelings. Magnus hoped the best, yet withdrew from the precipice of a dangerous confidence by saying:

"But to leave improbable things also. Could you wake up in the morning and find that you had only dreamed her death, and see her by your side—living, beautiful, loving—would you not clasp her to your heart in joy, exclaiming: 'Oh, dearest wife, I have had such a dreadful dream! It seemed, too, so very real. I dreamed that you were dead, Alice. Thank God, it was nothing but a dream! Now, ask me what you will, Alice, for I am so happy to know I have you yet—to know that you have not gone from my side, but are here—here!—that I can refuse you nothing.' Would those not be your words and feelings? And what would Alice say—what would Alice ask? What was nearest her heart when she fell asleep? What would she say could she now be restored, and should you ask her what would make her happy, but 'Father, be reconciled to your daughter!' General Garnet, the same letter that announced our sudden and mutual bereavement, the letter of that Christan minister, expressed a hope that the hand

of Death, which had led our friend away from our midst, leaving us all in a common sorrow, might reunite our hands in amity. General Garnet, that hope is my prayer. I entreat you, take my hand!"

General Garnet recoiled a step, and answered scornfully:

"Sir, I know you for an orator of old. But if you hope to work upon my feelings through the sorrow of my recent and very sudden loss, you deceive yourself. And now, hear me! Could—as you have put the question—could the doors of my wife's tomb fly open—and could she be restored to me, living, loving, in all the beauty and goodness of her being—could such impossibilities occur—and should the first boon she craved to bless her renewed life be the reconciliation you desire, that boon would be refused, though that refusal should send her back into the grave! Now I hope you understand me thoroughly."

Dr. Hardcastle nodded his head several times, keeping time to his thoughts, as he said, in his heart:

"And little do you surmise, poor man, that your refusal will send her back to the grave—for you! That she will be indeed dead—to you!"

General Garnet, taking this nod for one of assent, added:

"And now, I hope, sir, that no more false hopes may be raised upon me. Neither you nor your wife need ever expect anything at my hands. By my fireside, and at my board, and in my heart, the place of the late Miss Garnet is filled. This little girl, sir, is my daughter and heiress. I have regularly and legally adopted her. The late Miss Garnet had, but for your reminder, passed from my memory. Mrs. Hardcastle is an alien and a stranger, and I desire that she remain such. I beg you also to remember, sir, that, though I have a slight electioneering acquaintance with Dr. Hardcastle, such as every prominent politician may have with persons not to be recognized under any other circumstances, I do not wish even that acquaintance to continue. And I beg you to recollect that I have never even seen Mrs. Hardcastle, and never

wish to see her. I do not know the person, and never wish to know her. Have you anything more to advance, Dr. Hardcastle?"

"Yes, sir!" said Magnus, drawing himself up, and as his fine chest expanded, looking at his adversary with a brow, a glance that made him quail and drop his eyes. "You have dared to misrepresent my purpose in coming to you, or else you have naturally mistaken my motives —naturally, for it may not be in your nature to understand them. Yet, no, it is not so. You do not mistake me. And do not dare to affect it again. You know that your fortune is nothing—absolutely nothing—to me, and never was. So little do rank and fortune weigh with me against hearts and souls that, had I been a millionaire and had Elsie been the child of a beggar instead of a daughter of General Garnet, and the heiress of Mount Calm, I would have taken her to my bosom in the face of all the world. And, more—further, had Elsie possessed, in her own inalienable right, hundreds of millions, and I possessed no more than the clothes I wore, I would have married her, and not thanked her for the millions she brought me, but simply loved her for the beauty, the goodness, the love, the dear womanhood she gave me. So little do I value money where nature and affection are concerned. As it is, we are both poor, both will have to work hard. Elsie has chosen her lot in life, and shall abide by it. Even you, her father, shall not rescue her from it with your wealth. You cannot change her destiny. Your fortune could not do it. I am resolved to make, to command whatever success may be in life for us. Yet"—he added, with a softening brow and tone —"yet, father of my dear wife—for her sake, for your own, for mine, I would be reconciled with you. Spite of all the bitter things written upon your forehead, and spoken by your lips, and which I do not think your heart indorses, I would be at peace with you; bitter talk is but hasty breath. Let us forget it. Let us be friends. Now, then, for the last time I offer you my hand. For the last time, I beseech you take it."

General Garnet frowned darkly and averted his head.

But Nettie, who had been gazing kindly and admiringly at the speaker, now suddenly thrust out her little hand, and, emphatically striking it into the broad, open palm of Magnus, exclaimed cordially:

"Yes! Let us be friends! I'll be friends! I like you!"

There was no resisting that sparkling, cordial smile—that earnest, confiding manner, and Magnus closed his hand upon the child's hand, pressing it kindly.

"Godfather, why don't you ask the good-looking gentleman to sit down, and why don't you ring the bell and have wine brought for him like you did for Mr. Judge Jacky? Sit down, gentleman, in that armchair, and I will go and ring the bell," she said, jumping down and running to the bell-rope, which she pulled vigorously.

"Will you be seated, sir?" said General Garnet ironically.

"Will you first take my hand, General Garnet?"

"No, sir! To forbear is the utmost limit of my self-control. I cannot go further, and forgive. Yet you are in my house—standing by my fireside. While you bestow upon us your presence, I beg you be seated."

Magnus waved his hand in rejection of this invitation and turned to go, but Nettie, returning from her vociferous bell-ringing, stopped him by seizing both his hands and leaning up against him as she exclaimed:

"No! you mustn't go till you get something—I hear a boy coming now."

And at this moment, indeed, the door was opened, and a waiter appeared in answer to the noisy summons.

"Get some good wine and some sort o' witches—you make with bread and butter and ham—sandwitches, and bring up here for this gentleman. And make haste, you hear, because he is in a hurry," said Nettie to the waiter.

The man looked with surprise and perplexity from the self-constituted little mistress to the master. And General Garnet, in some perversity of mood, exclaimed fiercely:

"Well, sir! Why do you pause? Did you hear Miss Seabright's order?"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"Go and obey it, then. Do you wait for me to tell you that her commands here are only second to my own?"

"Yes, why don't you go along when I tell you that the good-looking gentleman is in a great hurry? What makes you look so queer?" exclaimed Nettie, stamping with impatience, but not with ill-humor.

The man bowed and withdrew.

Again Dr. Hardcastle sought to free himself from his loving little captor, but Nettie clung to him like a very nettle, or an opossum to a tree, exclaiming:

"No, sir, you mustn't go; you shan't go, till the wine comes."

And before he could get away the wine and sandwiches arrived. As the waiter walked straight up the room and set the refreshments upon the table, General Garnet turned coldly to Dr. Hardcastle, saying:

"My little daughter invites you to take something. Will you do so, sir?"

Dr. Hardcastle, who had been released by Nettie, declined the invitation, and retired, followed into the hall by Nettie, who sought to recapture and detain him. He raised the child, kissed her, and left the house at once.

After he had gone Nettie remained standing in the hall so long that General Garnet came out to seek her. Having found her, he exclaimed:

"Why do you linger so, my little Nettie? Come with me into the library, and let us go on with the pictures and stories."

"I don't want to go back to the library with you, godfather."

"What! Don't want to return with me and see the beautiful pictures, and hear the wonderful stories?"

"No; I don't care for the pictures, nor the stories, nor you, either, godfather. I want to go to my own room—and I wish you would call my maid."

"Whe-ew! How my little princess takes state upon herself! But I must say it becomes her—rarely. But

why does she not care for pictures, stories, or godfather, either?"

"Because, godfather, you treated the pleasant-spoken gentleman so meanly. I'm sure when I and Hugh and granny lived in the poor lodge, and had nothing to offer but persimmon beer and sour, knobby apples, we never treated our visitors so meanly. No, that we didn't! Granny used to say, 'Hospit—something or other—before everything,' which meant that it was a shame to treat well-behaved company meanly. And you treated the pleasant-spoken gentleman meanly. 'Deed, I thought he preached nice as the parson. But you treated him meanly—and I don't want to have anything to do with you, and I won't, either, have anything to do with you, godfather. I want my maid. Will you please to send her to me?"

Piqued, amused, attracted by the naïve candor and courage of the fond but passionate child, General Garnet laughed and held out his arms, saying:

"Oh, come to me, my little Nettie. Come and kiss me, and give me one of your tight hugs."

"'Deed, I won't, godfather!"

"Won't! Why?"

"'Cause I don't feel like it, one bit."

"Don't feel like it! Well, then, now what shall I give my little Nettie for a good, hearty hug and kiss—say? Shall it be a pony, or a little carriage, or a great wax doll, or what? Come! say now. What shall it be?"

"Nothing, godfather. You will give me all them things, anyhow, 'cause you promised them to me if I'd come and live 'long o' you. But I aint sure that I will take any of them—and I aint even sure that I shall stay."

General Garnet laughed aloud, and said:

"Very well! if you won't come and give me a good, hearty hug and kiss, neither for free love nor bribery, I can come and give you one." And he went toward her.

Nettie ran, flew up the stairs, and from the first landing looked down to see if she was pursued, and said:

"No, you mustn't, indeed, godfather. I had rather anyone hit me a hard lick right in the face than kiss me

when I don't want to be kissed. And I don't want to be kissed by you, godfather. I wouldn't kiss you hardly to save your life."

And having said this, Nettie fled the rest of the way upstairs. Hero was already there with a light to take charge of her.

"Strange! How strange it is that I love that wild child more and more—need her love more and more every hour that I live! Strange, passing strange, that with all her willfulness, I love that half-savage, but most beautiful thing, better than I ever loved anyone in the wide world! Oh, it is not strange, after all! It is because she loves me thoroughly—with every fiber of her soul and body; because I can trust in her, for she hides nothing from me—not even her childish anger."

. . . . . .

Dr. Hardcastle returned to Huttontown, and to the tavern, where he was to lodge that night. He intended to retire early, preparatory to a very early start the next morning. But first it was necessary to go to Mr. Fig's for the purpose of making a few purchases of articles that had been forgotten in his first packing up.

When he entered the grocery he saw, to his surprise, Hugh Hutton behind the counter, ready to serve him.

"Well, my boy," said he, extending his hand, "I am surprised and happy to see you again."

"Oh, doctor! have you really turned back? I am so very glad!" exclaimed Hugh, his countenance actually illuminated with joy.

"Yes, my boy. We had proceeded but a day's journey, when we heard of Mrs. Garnet's death, and came back."

"Where is Mrs. Hardcastle? Is she at the inn?"

"No, my boy; finding that we came too late for the funeral I took Mrs. Hardcastle immediately back to Deep Dell, where she now sojourns, waiting for me. I found it necessary to come back a second time. I have traveled the road between Huttontown and Deep Dell forth and back twice within a week, Hugh; and to-morrow morning, at five o'clock, I make the third start."

"The old folks say that there is great luck in the third attempt," said Hugh.

"I should think there was in my instance, if I could take you back with me, my boy."

"Oh, sir, Dr. Hardcastle, you can if you will," exclaimed Hugh, in a tone of anxious, eager solicitude.

"I assuredly will, if I can. And no obstacle exists with me. But your little sister, my boy?"

"Oh, sir, my little sister is better provided for than I could hope to provide for her for many years to come. She is the ward of General Garnet, and he has just this morning taken her home to live with him, and to be educated."

"How? What? Is it possible? The little, fond, wild, beautiful creature I saw at Mount Calm to-night?"

"Yes, sir, that was she—Garnet Seabright."

"What kin is she to you, boy—not your sister?"

"No kin at all, sir; but dear to me as if she were my twin sister."

"A beautiful child! A sweet, wild, haunting thing!"

"Oh, yes, sir; and so true and good—so trusting!"

"A little eerie, spirit-like thing! What a pity!" said Dr. Hardcastle, communing with himself; then, raising his voice, he said: "Well, you desire to accompany me, my boy? But how long have you been with Mr. Fig, and what are your obligations to him?"

"No obligations at all, sir. The truth is, seeing that from having been a help to aunty and Nettie in the time of their need I had got to be a hindrance in the way of their doing better than I could do for them, I went to Mr. Fig and told him that I would stand behind the counter and help about the store, for no more than my mere board—not even asking clothing—on conditions, it should be understood, I was to go to the West the very first chance that came. Well, Mr. Fig knew me, and how much I could do, and agreed to my plan; and so I came this morning, and have done a very hard day's work, too—hauling several cartloads of freight from the brig up to the store, and unloading them, and storing them in, and waiting behind the counter the rest of the

time. All that makes me feel well to-night. So, you see, sir, I owe Mr. Fig nothing but good friendship; and I am ready to set out with you to-morrow."

"Be it so, then, my boy. And I am rejoiced to know that in thus following the bent of your inclinations, you abandon no duty. Will you join me to-night, or early to-morrow morning?"

"Early to-morrow morning, Dr. Hardcastle. You may pick me up at the south gate of the falling-field, behind Mount Calm—that will be directly in your road. I must go up to Mount Calm, to-night, to bid good-by to Aunt Joe and Nettie."

"Very well, my boy. Be punctual."

And having obtained the articles for which he came Dr. Hardcastle left the store.

That night Hugh Hutton went up to Mount Calm. He succeeded in obtaining entrance to his Aunt Joe's rooms, but found, to his regret, that Nettie had some time before retired to bed, and was now fast asleep. He spent the night on a pallet in his aunt's room, and in the morning made up his bundle to start. Miss Joe objected, cried, bemoaned her fate and Hugh's, but finally consented to his departure; for Miss Joe believed in Hugh and had faith in Dr. Hardcastle, besides it would not sound so badly to tell the neighbors, by and by, that her nephew, Hugh Hutton, was "studying medicine underneath Dr. Hardcastle." So Miss Joe gave him her blessing, and went to wake up Nettie, to bid him farewell, prophesying all the while that Nettie would "take on dreadful." But Nettie did not "take on" at all; she threw herself joyously around Hugh's neck, gave him a hearty hug and kiss, and declared, that with his bundle across his shoulder he was Jack the Giant-Killer, going to seek his fortune; and that he must let her know about every giant he killed, and every enchanted lady he freed, and every magician's castle he took, and ever beautiful princess that loved him. And then she pulled the scarlet worsted comforter from her neck and wound it around Hugh's throat, tucking the ends into his coat breast, and bid him good-by. Hugh

went to the door, turned to take a last look, impulsively darted back, clasped his old aunty, and then Nettie, in a last embrace, sprung from the room, and was gone. A rapid walk brought him to the spot where he found Dr. Hardcastle, just arrived in his carryall, waiting for him, and exclaiming:

"Just in time, my boy—and very welcome. Jump in! All right!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ELSIE IN THE LOG CABIN.

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device,
Of such materials as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
—*Scott.*

THE place selected by Magnus Hardcastle as the field of his life labor was that grandly picturesque portion of Maryland now known as Alleghany County, but then called indifferently the Mountains, the Wilderness, or the Backwoods. The site chosen for his home was a wildly beautiful spot in the midst of a deep, narrow valley lying between two ridges of the Alleghany Mountains, and watered by a branch of the Potomac River. Although Magnus Hardcastle's first idea of a home in the backwoods presented nothing but a log cabin, and although his young and lovely bride was quite ready to dare and share the unmitigated rudeness and privations of such a home and life, yet Providence, who "tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb," mercifully ameliorated the hardships of the condition for the delicately nurtured girl, who, however willing, was, notwithstanding all her health and strength, scarcely able to bear the shock of such a sharp and sudden change. The contents of that casket—the bridal gift of Alice Garnet to her daughter—amounted to nearly five thousand dollars, and though the whole of this sum would go but a very little way

toward supplying the superfluities of a fashionable bride's trousseau, yet the half of it went very far toward completing and furnishing a comfortable backwoods home for our young couple. Their house was a log cabin indeed, but one of "ample size" and commodious appointments.

It was near the close of a fine winter day that Alice and Elsie were together in the family rooms of the cabin. This apartment was large, and supplied with all needful furniture. The walls were lathed and plastered, but not whitewashed, and retaining the original stone color, gave a sober tone to the air of the room. There was no carpet on the floor, but the broad hearth was a notable specimen of the fine arts, by Hugh Hutton, who declared, in his pride, that it was an interesting, instructive, and endless study, to anyone fond of tracing the individuality and infinite variety of natural form and color. The hearth was, in fact, a fine mosaic of fragments of rocks, of divers forms, sizes, and colors, perfectly filled in, leveled and chinked with a hard, white composition, that formed an irregular boundary line between the pieces. Each side the ample fireplace were dressers, constructed of strong plank, and at once laden and ornamented with crockery ware. From the lowest and broadest shelves hung dark calico curtains, reaching to the floor, and concealing "the humble little household gods," as Elsie called them. There were chairs and tables, made more for strength than beauty, ranged along the walls. The windows were curtained with dark calico. There was no article of luxury, no superfluity in the room, but everything was convenient, orderly, and immaculately clean.

A fine fire blazed in the broad chimney, and though the hour was growing dark, it illuminated the room, so as to render a lighted candle unnecessary. The tea-kettle hung over the blaze, an oven lid sat upon the logs by its side, and the oven was turned up against the front of the fire to heat for baking.

Elsie stood at a deal-table, making out biscuits—busy, healthful, and happy as ever.

A little to the left of the blazing, too-hot fire, sat Alice,

in a rocking-chair, and—a reverie. There was but one change in Alice since we saw her last. The sunny ringlets of her unfaded hair (be it remembered that she was but thirty-five), the sunny ringlets of her hair were turned around her cheek, and their end twisted around with her back braid. A little lace cap which she wore, because she said a cap was proper for her at her time of life, and in her relations, sat gracefully upon her still beautiful head, and gave a softness to the outline of her delicate and spiritual face, making her seem even more youthful and beautiful than before. She had been embroidering an infant's dress, but the work had dropped into her lap, and her hand had fallen upon the little snow-white heap of muslin, and the richly-chased gold thimble glittered idly in the firelight; but the tiny foot, in the delicate slipper, was not idle—it turned upon the rockers of a cradle, where, amid downy pillows and soft white drapery, reposed a lovely babe of about two months of age. Altogether this beautiful and graceful group was a little out of keeping with the log cabin, to which it nevertheless lent a charm. But then, Elsie had always laughingly said that her mother was an ingrain "lady," while she herself, for her own part, was "only a woman."

Elsie having finished making out her biscuits, brought the tray to the fire to put them on to bake. While kneeling with one knee upon the hearth to arrange her bread in the oven, she looked up at her mother's pensive face, and said, sympathetically:

"Dear mother, it seems to me you are not happy, though you would have us believe it is so?"

"Elsie, no one is perfectly happy; that is a saying as old as the plucking of the forbidden fruit that first brought suffering into the world, and yet we never believe it. We are ever striving for that perfect happiness which is impossible."

"I do not believe it to be impossible, dear mother. I am a firm believer in perfect earthly happiness; I am so near it myself. Why, even now, I should be perfectly happy but for the shadow on your brow, mother."

"'But,' there is ever a 'but.' It is the order of life,

and I am content with it. Be at ease, dear; I, too, should be perfectly happy, but——"

"What, dearest mother?"

"I am a living falsehood, Elsie."

"Mother!"

"Child, I did not mean to speak so strongly. But I have a secret to keep that pains me always—a sinful secret, inasmuch as I am conscious that the keeping of it may cause sin in others."

"Sin, mother?"

"Yes, Elsie; your father is in the prime of life; he believes himself a widower. What if he were to marry again?"

"Ha! I never thought of that. It seems so strange to me that people should ever marry again."

"I know it does, my happy Elsie; but, nevertheless, they do, you know. Elsie, I have refrained from speaking of my thought, because I did not wish to distress you or have an argument with your husband; but, my love, I feel that I ought to write to General Garnet, and after that, as you and yours are doing so very well, and as you are all so comfortable and happy, and as I should not be missed among you, I think, if General Garnet wishes it, I ought to go home."

"He will not wish it, mother; you know he has a gentlemanly horror of a nine-days' wonder. Sweet mother, you must remain with us. Not miss you! Whom should we have to wait upon and adore if you were gone? And as for writing, mother, talk to Magnus about that. Here he comes now, and Hugh with him, as usual, and—a stranger with him, as unusual. Who can it be?" said Elsie, as, setting the lid upon the oven and replacing the tray upon the table, she looked out of the window into the moonlit yard.

The door opened, and Magnus Hardcastle entered, accompanied by a gentleman, and followed by Hugh Hutton. The stranger was clothed in a suit of rusty black, his tall, slim figure was slightly bowed, and his black hair was thickly mixed with gray.

"Come in, sir; come in, sir. Hugh, my student, there,

will care for your horse. Come in, sir. It is needless to say that you are most gladly welcome. A guest is a God-send to us. Come to the fire, sir," said Dr. Hardcastle, leading the way.

"Mrs. Garnet, let me present to you the Rev. Mr. Sinclair, missionary to the Winnebagoes, who will do us the honor of resting in our cabin for a few days, on his western route. Mr. Sinclair, Mrs. Garnet of Mount Calm."

"Is it possible! Alice!" ejaculated the stranger, dropping hat, gloves, and whip, and reeling on his feet.

A slight paleness overspread the face of the lady, but rising with perfect ease, she offered her hand, saying:

"Mr. Sinclair, it is many years since we last met. I am very glad to see you."

He drew back, then took the hand she offered, and looked wonderingly, searchingly, into her face, as if to read her soul. Her face was impassible to him. Turning to Dr. Hardcastle, she said:

"My dear Magnus, this is a very old acquaintance you have brought me, an acquaintance of my girlhood. Elsie, my love!"

Elsie came forward.

"Mr. Sinclair," she continued, still retaining his hand, "let me introduce you to my daughter, Mrs. Hardcastle. Elsie, my love, Mr. Sinclair is a very old friend of mine."

"I am very glad to see you, sir. I should be glad even if you were a perfect stranger, but I am very glad to see an old friend of my mother's. Do take this chair between mother and the chimney corner, sir; it is not the post of honor, perhaps, but it is the most comfortable and convenient seat, as you can rest and toast your feet and talk over old times with mother at the same time—old times, I said. She does not look like she had seen any very old times, does she, sir?" said Elsie, gayly talking on, while she shook the hand of the guest and installed him in his seat.

"Mamma,—'Mrs. Garnet of Mount Calm,'—pray take the entertainment of Mr. Sinclair upon yourself, while I attend to that for which I have the most talent—I mean

the creature comforts. Don't tell him, mamma, that if ever I lose my soul through either of the three great enemies of souls, 'the world, the flesh, and the devil,' it will be by the flesh, for that I have very little of worldliness, not a whit of diabolism, but a grand passion for creature comforts," said Elsie, laughing, as she raised the lid off the oven. "These biscuits are going to be very nice," she remarked, as the steam of the fresh warm bread greeted their nostrils. She then replaced the lid, perceived and picked up the fallen hat, gloves, and whip of the minister, looked at him as the most careless and slovenly man she ever saw in her life, brushed and put away the things, and hurried on with her preparations for supper.

"And is this the residence of the wealthy and distinguished General Garnet's widow and daughter?" said Sinclair, in a deep, stern tone, looking around upon the rough walls.

"It is the home of General Garnet's daughter, certainly, and the temporary home of his wife."

"Ah! I beg your pardon, earnestly—yet—the mistake was very natural," said the minister.

"Hugh, attend to that gentleman's animal in the very best manner. Dear Magnus, please to get me some more wood. Hugh, take the bucket, and, as you come back, bring me a bucket of water. Dear Magnus, we must not forget to request the minister to christen our baby. It may be a long time before we have another opportunity, and anyhow, I prefer Mr. Sinclair to officiate; it will be so interesting, he being mother's old friend," said Elsie, as she hurried about, speaking to first one and then another, attending to everything and forgetting nothing. Supper was speedily placed upon the table—tea, fresh butter and eggs, venison, and the nice biscuits. The minister asked a blessing, but ate little. And soon after they arose from the table, Mr. Sinclair pleaded fatigue, and requested to be shown to his room.

Dr. Hardcastle attended him to his chamber.

When Magnus returned to the family room he found the tea things had been already washed up and put away,

the hearth swept, the fire replenished, and the two ladies with their needlework, and Hugh with his books, all gathered around the table that was lighted by but one tallow candle. He drew a chair up with the rest, and, putting his hand in his pocket, said:

"I have got a letter from Huttontown."

"A letter from Huttontown!" exclaimed all three, looking eagerly up.

"Yes, from Mr. Wilson."

"What's the news? How is father?" asked Elsie.

"Does he speak of the general? How is he?" inquired Alice anxiously.

"How are all the folks? How is Aunt Joe and Nettie?" asked Hugh Hutton. All were speaking together, and all eagerly awaiting an answer.

"Peste! ladies and young gentleman, I cannot answer all at once," said Magnus, smiling, yet with something constrained in his manner. "I will read the letter; it is very short; a mere note—a mere matter of business."

"Well?" said Alice, seeing him pause.

"A mere announcement, in truth—a—but I will read it. Hugh, you're discreet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Elsie, my dear, I have been anxious to submit this letter to your mother and yourself all the evening."

"Well, well, Magnus. My mother is on thorns, and I am scarcely more at ease. Has anything happened? You look 'perplexed, yet not in despair'—not like the recipient of very ill news."

"Why, no, not of ill news, yet strange news. You know before I came away from Huttontown the last time I requested the Rev. Mr. Wilson to inform me immediately by letter of anything important that might occur at Mount Calm, and concern us."

"Yes, yes. Well?"

"He has done so. Here is his letter—listen."

"HUTTONTOWN, January, 18—.

"DEAR DR. HARDCASTLE: At our last interview you desired me, in the event of General Garnet's contemplat-

ing any second matrimonial engagement, to inform you, by letter, without delay, saying that it vitally concerned the welfare of all parties that this should instantly be done. Without having the most remote idea of the cause of your very emphatic instructions, I hasten to obey them, by advising you that General Garnet and Miss Wylie of Point Pleasant are to be married on Tuesday next. Nothing is talked of but the match and the great preparations making for the wedding at Point Pleasant, and for the reception of the bride at Mount Calm. The family of the lady seem very well pleased with the match. Ulysses Roebuck, the jilted lover, has gone—sailed for Europe, with the purpose of making the grand tour.

"There, you have the facts that most interest you. There is nothing else stirring; all the same dull, dead level; a birth, death, or marriage would be an historical event in this village.

"With respects to your lady, I remain,

"Your sincere friend,

"E. WILSON."

"Good Heaven! There, what did I tell you, Elsie!" exclaimed Alice, clasping her hands.

"My dear mother! my darling mother! never mind. There is one love on earth that shall never fail you. I can have no second mother," said Elsie, rising and throwing her arms around the lady's neck.

"Magnus, you see that I must go. I must write to-night, to prepare him for my arrival, and to-morrow I must set out myself."

"Oh, no, mother; don't go! It will be worse than ever now in your old home. Oh, mamma, don't go! Write—only write. Or if it be indispensable that someone go, Magnus will. Will you not, Magnus?"

"I will do whatever your mother wishes."

"Then, dearest Magnus, mail my letter to-night, even late as it is, and prepare to set out with me to-morrow. Yet, no: you must not leave Elsie. Prepare me a way to go alone."

"Dear Mrs. Garnet, dear friend, I implore you not to think of going. I will go myself."

"Magnus, dear, you know that upon some points I can be stubborn. I must go straight to Mount Calm," said Alice.

And despite all arguments and entreaties, she persisted in her resolution.

"Then, since you will go, I shall attend you to the end of your journey, and—bring you back—perhaps."

"But, Elsie; you cannot leave her alone and unprotected at home."

"She will not be alone; Hugh will be with her; and for protection, my brave wife can protect herself, if necessary. Pooh! my dear madam, I would leave Elsie here in the heart of the wilderness six months, if needful, without fear or hesitation. She is one in a million, our Elsie. What say you, dear Elsie?"

"I say—go with mother if you love me, Magnus. See her safe to her journey's end, and, if it be possible, bring her safe back to me again."

That same night Alice's letter was written and mailed.

The next morning, at an early hour Alice Garnet set out, under the protection of Dr. Hardcastle, for the East.

An hour later, when the Rev. Mr. Sinclair arose and came down to breakfast, Mrs. Hardcastle tendered him the compliments and excuses of his host, informing him that a domestic affair of vital moment called Mrs. Garnet suddenly to Mount Calm, whither Dr. Hardcastle was instantly obliged to attend her.

After breakfast the minister, leaving his respects and adieus for the absentees, took leave and proceeded on his journey.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT CAME NEXT.

Uncomfortable time! why camest thou now
To murder—murder our solemnity?
—*Shakspere.*

It was two days before the appointed wedding day, and General Garnet sat in his library, over his wine, in deep consultation with his lawyer.

"And, you say, sir, that my will might be successfully contested?" he asked, setting down his empty glass, and looking anxiously, half angrily, at the attorney.

"I give it, sir, as my best digested legal opinion, that in the event of your death, should the will by which you bequeath all this vast property to your adopted daughter be contested, it would probably be set aside in favor of Alice Chester Hardcastle, the only living representative of the old Chester family, who have held the land from the first settlement of the country to the present time—upward of two hundred years. You know, sir, that the decision of the case would rest finally with the jury, and such are the prejudices in favor of wealth, rank, hereditary descent, and——"

"Well! speak out—justice, you would add, I suppose," said General Garnet, filling his glass and passing the bottle.

The lawyer bowed.

"Well, sir! what of these prejudices? Finish your sentence."

"That scarce a jury could be found to give a verdict against your legal daughter—a Chester—and in favor of your—I beg your pardon—adopted daughter—a stranger and an alien."

"Sir, you know nothing of the law. I shall seek better legal advice," exclaimed General Garnet, bringing down his glass upon the table with a force that shivered it, and rising in an excited manner.

"You may seek other, and find more palatable advice,

sir. Our consultation ends here. I wish you good-evening, sir," said the lawyer, rising and going to the door.

"Stay!" said General Garnet, going after him.

But the attorney bowed deeply and retired.

General Garnet continued to pace up and down the floor, with a strange, excited manner, totally at variance with his usual serene self-possession. Frequently, also, he stopped—poured out and quaffed a glass of wine. At last, pausing, he struck his forehead, emphatically exclaiming:

"I have it, now! a deed! To-morrow morning, the first thing I do will be to have drawn up, sign, seal, and record a deed of conveyance, giving the whole of this estate to Garnet Seabright, and retaining only a life interest in it myself. Yes! a deed! There will be no contesting or setting aside that, I fancy. And whether I die next year, or a hundred years hence, Nettie, if she lives, becomes possessed of all this property. Yes! yes! I must revenge myself upon Hardcastle. I must punish that ungrateful daughter—true scion of the stubborn Chesters. And by all means, by any means—I must—will!—elevate and aggrandize Nettie—my child, my darling, my darling, the only thing on earth that loves me. Yes! elevate and aggrandize her until I force the world to recognize her. Nettie, my heart's core! whose thought has power to banish even the image of my young bride from my mind!—to banish it, because fair and lovely and loving as she is—her fantastical and selfish passion, flattering as it is—is a more selfish thing than your sweet affection, my darling child. Yet she is beautiful, this fervid Ambrosia! And once this business settled—this deed that secures wealth and rank to my Nettie, executed and recorded, I shall be free to yield up soul and senses to this dream of passion. How my thoughts wander! I am giddy. I am not well. When ever did I talk to myself before? I must stop this. I will consult a physician to-morrow," said General Garnet, sitting down, and drinking great draughts of wine.

The next day, true to his purpose, he rode to Hutton-

town, and had the deed of conveyance, giving all the great Mount Calm property to Garnet Seabright, and reserving only a life interest in it himself, drawn up, signed, and witnessed with all legal formulæ. Then he rode with it himself to the county town, and had it recorded. In the course of the day the slight indications of approaching illness that had visited him the night before returned, and now, with more marked emphasis. Sudden vertigo, with failure of sight and confusion of thought, would seize him an instant, pass away—return again, and again pass. He drew up his horse at last before a doctor's office, entered, sat down, and apologizing for troubling the physician with such a trifling indisposition by saying, jestingly, that he wished to be in perfect health upon his wedding day—he related his symptoms.

"It is nothing, sir," said the physician, after he had felt his pulse, etc. "It is nothing. Do not be alarmed, I beseech you! Keep a calm mind; it is of vital importance that you keep a calm mind. I would advise you to defer your marriage for a few weeks."

"Do you think, sir, that I am threatened with——"

"No, sir! Oh, no, there is not the least occasion for alarm; these symptoms must yield to a very little judicious treatment. Abstain from the use of wine and stimulating food, and, above all things, avoid all agitation and excitement; keep from all places and persons that have the least effect upon your nerves. A day or so will set you up again. Stay, I will write you a little prescription. Here, sir, take this—it is simply a cooling draught; follow directions, and all will be right."

General Garnet took the scrap of paper, bowed, and withdrew, with a contemptuous smile upon his lips, muttering to himself:

"Fool that I am, to seek medical advice of a fellow whose interest it is to make and keep me ill for a month or so! Shall I take this prescription, now? No, I feel better already. The fresh air has revived me. I will go to Point Pleasant and spend the evening with Ambrosia; her sweet smile and gentle touch will charm this fitful illness."

And turning his horse's head, General Garnet took the road to Judge Wylie's. The sky was clouding up, but, heedless of the threatened rain, he rode on rapidly to Point Pleasant. He spent a long, delightful evening with Miss Wylie, and left, at a late hour, more intoxicated than ever with the alluring beauty of his promised bride, and repeating, in an impassioned tone, many times, the words of his parting: "To-morrow! oh, to-morrow, Ambrosia."

He faced a cold and driving rain all the way home, and arrived at his own gate, dripping wet.

Throwing the reins of his horse to an attendant, he hastened into the house. The voice of Nettie greeted him.

"Here, godfather! come in here to the library; here is a good fire, and your dressing-gown and slippers all warm, and hot coffee and oysters and wine. I made them for you."

Divesting himself of his wet overcoat, cap, leggings, and gloves, he walked into the library, where he found Nettie presiding over the comforts she had prepared for him.

"My dear little brownie! Why are you up so late?"

"The rain waked me up, godfather, and then I couldn't sleep any more for thinking you were out in it. So I got up and dressed myself, and came down here to make things comfortable for you."

"My own Nettie! I have been making things comfortable for you, also! But where is your granny?"

"Gone to bed these two hours."

"And now you must go, my dear little one. Come and kiss me close, and then, good-night."

The elf sprang to his neck, squeezing him tightly, and rooting herself into his bosom, as though she would grow there, and then suddenly springing off, bounded from the room.

The little supper standing before him did not tempt his appetite. With another retrospective glance of contempt at the physician's advice, he turned to the table and poured out and swallowed glass after glass of wine.

Then, without heeding the mail-bag that hung upon the chair, or ringing for a servant to clear off the things, or even closing up the house, as was his invariable custom, he arose and retired to his chamber.

. . . . . .

At this same hour, on the turnpike road, about six miles distant from Mount Calm, plunged on through darkness, mire, and driving rain, a one-horse chaise, occupied by two travelers—Dr. Hardcastle and Mrs. Garnet. They traveled on in perfect silence for two hours before reaching the grounds of Mount Calm. But, upon passing the outer gate and entering upon the premises, Alice became nervous and uneasy, and at length she asked:

"Magnus, do you feel positively assured that he has received my letter, that he is prepared and expecting to see me?"

"Without a doubt, dear Mrs. Garnet, he got your letter to-day at noon; assuredly, late as it is, he must be now expecting us."

"I wonder if he really does. I wonder if he has spread the news among the people of the plantation! It is really necessary to know, dear Magnus. Else my sudden and unexpected apparition among them will cause a general alarm and rouse the neighborhood."

"Very true, and at the first quarter I come to I will alight and find out."

They rode on in silence until they came to a solitary quarter on the outskirts of the plantation. Then Dr. Hardcastle, alighting, gave the reins to Mrs. Garnet, and trudged through the deep mud and pelting rain to the cabin from whence a faint light issued, and the low, sweet sound of a violin was heard. He rapped smartly with the handle of his riding whip. The music ceased, and a voice, which he recognized as belonging to Bob, the driver, called out from within:

"Hoo dar, rappin' at my door dis onseasonable hour o' de night?"

"Me, Bob! your old friend, Dr. Hardcastle; open the door and show yourself."

"Oh, my Gor A'mighty, Marse Magnate, is it you, sure 'nough, come from forrin parts?" ejaculated the old negro, fumbling at the wooden latch and wrenching open the door. "Come in, come in—come in, Marse Magnate, come in. Oh, blessed Lor'! I'm so joyed to see you. How is Miss Elsie! she long o' you? Come in!"

"No, Bob, I cannot come in. I am going straight on to the house. Elsie is not with me; she is at home, and —well, I can't come in. I only called by to see you, my old friend, and to ask you if all were well at the house, and if anything new had happened."

"All well dar, honey, 'deed dey is, fus' rate. Nuffin new, honey, 'cept 'tis Marse I'on g'wne be marry to Miss Ambush Wylie to-morrow night."

"Ah! Well, I wrote to General Garnet to say that I was coming to-night; is he expecting me, do you know?"

"'Deed he got de letter, honey, caze I fotch it from de pos' office myself dis mornin', an' de pos' marsr said how it war from out yonder where you gone to. But I never hear General I'on say nuffin 'bout 'spectin' no one to de weddin', 'deed I didn't, honey. Let me run along to de house an' rouse 'em all up and tell ole marse how you've come."

"No, by no means, Bob. Thank you, good-night," said Dr. Hardcastle, jumping into the carriage.

"All right, he has received your letter, madam; but has not imparted its contents to anyone. He is doubtless expecting you momentarily; but as no one else is, your sudden appearance would strike a panic to the household, suddenly roused up out of their sleep, or perhaps send them all shrieking from the plantation."

"But would not your presence by my side—they know you're alive—reassure them?"

"My dear Mrs. Garnet, they assisted at your funeral, twelve months ago, and seeing us enter at midnight together will sooner believe me to be a second ghost than you to be a living woman. No, my dear friend, you must veil yourself closely, and after I have got you into the house, pass quietly up to General Garnet's chamber

and reveal yourself to him. Here we are at last," said Dr. Hardcastle, pulling up before the front door of the mansion.

All was dark except a fitful light that gleamed and sunk, and gleamed and sunk, from the upper windows of General Garnet's chamber—as if a candle was expiring there in the socket.

"It must be near two o'clock—yet he is still sitting up for me—see there," whispered Alice, pointing to the flashing and darkening light.

"He must be alone, and have dropped asleep by that expiring light," murmured Magnus, as he led her up the stairs to the front door. "Now, courage, my dear friend. Remember that in me you have a protector near you," whispered Dr. Hardcastle, as he fumbled about in the dark for the knocker. In doing so the door swung silently open—it had evidently been left ajar. They entered noiselessly. The hall was perfectly dark and silent; no sound was heard but the moan of the wind and the heavy fall of the rain without. "Now, dearest Alice, he has evidently left the door ajar that you might enter without rousing the servants, and make your way at once to his chamber, where he awaits you. Go on—yet! stay! I do not like the looks of this thing, either. No one knows of your existence—no one knows that you were expected here; he awaits you alone in the solitude, silence, and darkness of deep night. No, Alice! I cannot let you go alone to his baleful presence—I must attend you."

"Not for the world, Magnus. What monstrous thought is in your mind? Does midnight storm and solitude raise such phantoms of fear in your strong mind?"

"Alice! bethink you! he is a man of fearful passions, yet of profound subtlety and secretiveness. He believed you dead and was about to be married. He finds that he has been deceived in your death, and that his own marriage is about to be ridiculously broken off. He has imaginary injuries to revenge, and endangered joys to secure—both ends to be reached by one means. And,

more than all, he has the fearful temptation of fancied impunity. Alice, take care! This open door—this silent house—this lonely watcher in the solitary chamber—this deep night hour—and the expected lonely visitor. Alice, take care!" whispered Magnus.

"Horrible! most horrible. You make my blood curdle. Not with fear, but with horror, at the monster in your imagination. You must not enter with me. I will go in alone. Follow, if you please to do so, at a short distance. I have no such dreadful fear or doubt. I tremble, it is true; but I should also tremble if, in broad daylight, a score of people witnessed our meeting. Come on, and remain upon the landing while I go in."

. . . . . .

On entering his chamber General Garnet suddenly bethought himself of something—he could not exactly think what—forgotten. A strange absence of mind, temporary loss of memory, transient confusion of thought, had fitfully afflicted him all day long. He put his hand to his forehead, and walked up and down in doubt and perplexity, then suddenly recollecting what he wanted, he rang the bell, and when a servant, half-dressed, appeared, demanded, impatiently:

"Anything from the post office to-day, sir?"

"Yes, marser. Bob, he went to de post office an' fotch de bag."

"Then where is it, you scoundrel? and why was it not brought to me?" stamped the master.

"De-ur-ur——" stammered the negro, in fear and perplexity, scratching his head for an answer.

"Sir!" thundered General Garnet.

And the reply bolted from the lips of the negro as if thumped out by a blow between his shoulders:

"Ugh! Yes, sir! You wan't comed home when it 'riv, marser, an' I hanged it on a chair by de liberry table, where you could see it when you comed."

"And if I had forgotten all about it, as I did, you scoundrel! Go and bring it to me. Vanish!"

The man precipitately retreated, and soon reappeared with the mailbag, which he placed in the hands of his

master, who immediately opened and turned out its contents.

"Only one letter! And that—— D——!" exclaimed General Garnet, recognizing the handwriting of Magnus Hardcastle in the superscription of Alice's letter. "Here, you sir! Come here!" added he, hastily blotting out the superscription and re-directing it. "Come here! take this letter! By the earliest dawn to-morrow take it back to the post office, that it may be in time for the mail, and tell the postmaster to send it back where it came from." He tossed the letter toward the feet of the negro, who tremblingly approached, picked it up, and retired from the chamber.

Left alone he paced up and down the floor in troubled thought, for about the space of an hour. All about the house was profoundly still; no sound was heard but the mournful murmur of the wind, and the dreary beating of the rain. The clock struck twelve, and the strokes fell through the awful stillness of the night with preternatural solemnity.

"So late! and I not yet calm enough to sleep—fearing to sleep, almost, lest I should never wake again. What is this? Why now does the solitude and silence of my chamber so affect, so appall, me? The truth is, I am ill! must be, or I should not be so weak. I did not kill her. No, I did not kill her. I did not take any means to recover her for hours? Well! what if I did not? That was not murder! I let her die in her fit for want of assistance? She might have died anyhow. Why does her image haunt my bed, driving sleep thence? Oh, miserable weakness! Oh, cowardice! Would my bitterest enemy believe it of me? that I dread to look around me, lest I see her face? It is this that is my illness. Oh, doctor! can your drugs banish her thoughts? Pshaw! They say nothing evil can come into the neighborhood of innocence. Nettie! my Nettie is near me! in the next room. Surely my reason wanders. What evil could come nigh me? She was not 'evil' on earth. She is not 'evil' in heaven. She would not avenge herself, if she could. Oh, wretched driveling! What am I talking

of? I am ill—I must be. It is illness that raises these phantoms of dread. And solitude and uncommunicated thoughts and sorrows have caused this illness. Courage! This is my last lonely night. To-morrow, and ever after to-morrow, the cheerful face of that fair girl shall banish all such sickly fancies. To-morrow, and ever after to-morrow. But to-night I cannot rest at all. I—I will go and look at Nettie, sleeping; the innocence of slumbering childhood shall disperse the cloud of devils lowering over me. Nettie! 'The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children——' I dare not. No! I dare not now. No! I dare not."

He dropped upon a chair—struck both hands to his forehead, whence the cold sweat oozed. He sat there, heedless, while the wind moaned around the house, and the rain beat drearily against the windows. He sat there, motionless, until the clock struck one, and the stroke fell like a knell. He started then, but relapsed, immediately, into statue-like stillness. The hour passed on, while the rain still beat, and the wind still moaned. The candle burned low in its socket, but he did not heed it. It flashed, filling the room with a strange brilliancy, and sunk, leaving it in darkness—but he did not heed it. It flashed and darkened—and flashed and darkened ever—but he did not heed it.

The door swung open—but he did not know it. Alice, his lost wife, stood within, motionless—pale—but he did not see her. She gazed at him—growing paler every instant—she glided toward him—she stood over him—where he sat, with his face buried in his hands—but he gave no sign of consciousness. Trembling, pale, and cold with fear, she laid her icy hands upon him, saying, in a voice faint and hollow with exhausted emotion:

"Aaron, I have come."

He sprang up as if shot; his face ashy pale, his countenance aghast, hair bristling, eyes starting with horror, as he exclaimed:

"Then such things are! You have taken form at last! or else—yes—it must be so—I am mad—mad!"

Dashing his hands against his forehead, as though to

shut out a horrible vision, he sunk back again into his chair.

Astonished, terrified, shuddering, Alice approached again, kneeled by his side, spoke gently, soothingly, deprecatingly to him.

But ere she ceased speaking his hands dropped from his forehead, his head sank upon his bosom, his form swayed to and fro an instant, and then he fell forward, prostrate, at the feet of his wife.

A succession of violent screams from Alice brought Dr. Hardcastle rushing in at one door, and Nettie, in her nightgown, flying in at the other.

They gathered around the fallen man. They raised him, set him in his chair.

General Garnet was dead.

. . . . . .

After that the wild shrieks of a distracted child, refusing to be comforted, filled the house of death.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FLIGHT OF TIME.

And years flew by, and the tale at last
Was told as a sorrowful one, long past.
—*Mistletoe Bough.*

It was the morning of Garnet Seabright's majority, when she was to come into possession of the vast estate given her by her adopted father, and she was expecting a visit from her trustee to give an account of his stewardship and yield up his office.

Lionel Hardcastle, foreordained by General Garnet as the husband of his inheritrix, had been appointed trustee of the estate and guardian of the heiress, and of—his own interests at the same time.

And well had he fulfilled his trust; no Eastern despot had ever established a stricter guard over a young

Georgian maid than did this guardian over the heiress. At the early age of twelve he had placed her at a strict convent school, where she avowed that she had to eat, drink, and sleep; pray, sing, and learn lessons; sit, stand, and walk by exact rule. We may fancy the effect of such a discipline upon our wild child. The fleet deer of the mountain penned, the free bird of the air caged, was nothing to this wild child of sea and land confined! At first she was anxious to go; for all children like change; but at the first visit of her guardian, whom with her confiding nature she already loved, she sprang upon his lap, threw her arms around his neck, entreated, prayed, wept to be taken away; and when she found her vehement solicitations vain, she passionately dashed her hand into his face, called him an evil spirit, sprang from his arms, and threw herself face downward flat upon the floor; called the good sisterhood a pack of witches, with Hecate at their head, and threatened to starve herself to death, as the partridge did she tried to tame once; and so, by this conduct, got herself into disgrace for a week. There is great adaptativeness in childhood, and in time our little girl became reconciled to her convent, especially as the gentle nuns took an affectionate interest in civilizing the little barbarian, who, notwithstanding her faults, drew all hearts to herself. The effect of this conventual education was altogether good. It cultivated and directed the powers of her intellect and moral sense, and taught her to control the almost savage strength and daring of her passionate and energetic nature. But she left the convent distinguished by the same inflexibility of will with which she had entered its walls. By the will of her adopted father she was not to marry until she had attained the age of twenty-one, and though then her choice was not absolutely controlled, it was directed to her guardian. It was upon this account, and to seclude her from society and the chance of forming another attachment, that, despite the conscientious expostulations of the Mother Superior, he left her boarding at the convent until she had nearly reached her twentieth birthday. About that time Miss Seabright became

inspired with a desire to see the world—not society, but the earth and all thereon; so, without asking any favors, she expressed her will to leave the convent and travel for a year. This proposition well suited the views of her guardian, as it obviated the awkward necessity of leaving her in the convent, or the impolitic alternative of introducing her into society, and gave him an admirable opportunity of pressing his suit, and even imposing upon her the inevitable propriety of accepting him.

They made the tour of Europe together, journeying over the kindred soil of Old England, the "sunny land" of France, the old chivalric mountains of Spain, the classic plains of Italy and Greece, the Alpine precipices of Switzerland; along the forest, rock, and castle-shadowed rivers of Germany; over the snow-clad plains of Russia, and thence down amid the mosques and seraglios of Turkey. By Mr. Hardcastle's position and connection in America, and his letters of presentation to our ministers abroad, he might have obtained introduction for himself and ward into the best society of every capital in Europe, but it did not suit his policy to do so. And even when her love of travel was somewhat sated, and Miss Seabright expressed a desire to enter the world of society, he put her off from time to time with various excuses. As her wish to mingle with the world was not very strong, she did not insist. And thus at the end of thirteen months' travel in Europe Miss Seabright set out on her return home as "innocent of the knowledge" of the world as when she had left her convent walls. She had had the opportunity of studying deeply but one specimen of human nature, and him she had well learned —her guardian and traveling companion, Lionel Hardcastle. Repeatedly had he pressed his suit, and eloquently had he pleaded the passion with which his recent intimate association with the unique and beautiful girl had inspired him. And repeatedly, amid protestations of gratitude and friendship, had she lamented her utter inability to meet his love. He bided his time!

It was in this relative position that the guardian and ward returned to Mount Calm early in the spring of

18—. Miss Seabright had indulged her love of luxury with the purchase of elegant furniture in France. These had been transported to Mount Calm, where the mansion house had been superbly fitted up for the reception of its young mistress.

It was then a fine day in the month of March that Miss Seabright sat in her library, awaiting the arrival of her guardian.

"Mr. Lionel Hardcastle!" announced a servant, throwing open the door. Miss Seabright seated herself before the library table, and Mr. Lionel Hardcastle entered the library, accompanied by old Mr. Hardcastle, his father, and a lawyer.

A half hour was occupied in the reading and transferring of certain documents, of which the lawyer finally took charge.

Then the gentlemen got up to take leave. Miss Seabright also arose, to dismiss them; but when she saw that Lionel Hardcastle was about to bow the others out with the purpose of remaining himself, she courteously advanced, and invited them all to remain and dine. A quick telegraphic look from Lionel Hardcastle to his father arrested the old gentleman's intention of accepting, so that, excusing himself, he took leave and withdrew, followed by the lawyer. Miss Seabright also followed, with the intention of leaving the library, but Lionel Hardcastle intercepted her purpose by bowing the gentlemen out, and closing the door after them. Miss Seabright retreated to the library table, where she stood erect, with one hand resting upon the table, and with her fiery eyes concentrating all their rays into a burning focus in the gaze she fixed upon his face. Yet he winced not; but advancing calmly toward her, said: "That attitude and gaze, Miss Seabright, would remind me that my authority as your guardian ceases from this hour."

"Without referring to that circumstance, Mr. Hardcastle, I would only plead excessive weariness of this room, and to be excused for the remainder of the day."

"You do not look in the least fatigued; and just now

you even invited my father and your lawyer to remain and dine with you."

"And extended the same invitation to yourself; which I now repeat. Will you now accept it, and excuse me for an hour's repose until dinner time?" she asked calmly—calmly, yet he could see by those dark eyes, which blazed and darkened under their heavy lids like a flashing and expiring flame, that under that quiet exterior, volcanic passion stirred, threatening every instant to break out in destroying fury, and only restrained by the force of her own will and the power of her own moral sense.

He folded his arms, and gazed on her; his look was resolved, his face was ashen pale, all the strength and fire of his nature seemed concentrated and burning in his eyes, and in the gaze he fixed upon her face. He answered, slowly, "No, Miss Seabright; there is no repose for me, shall be none for you, until you hear me. I will not leave this room, nor suffer you to leave it, until you hear me. Hitherto you have disregarded your benefactor's expressed will and wishes, contemned my claims, despised my love."

"Your 'love'? Is yours the language or the deportment of love?" she asked, in the deep, stern tone of suppressed indignation.

His manner suddenly changed; and from insolent and threatening, became submissive and deprecating. He dashed his hands suddenly against his forehead, then threw himself at her feet, seized her hands and dropping his head upon them, almost wept, exclaiming: "No, no, Garnet! mine were not the words or acts of love, but of 'love to frenzy driven.' I forswear them. Pardon me, pardon me. Garnet, I love you! I adore you! I worship you! Not that you have beauty, grace, genius—all these I have seen in other women, with an undisturbed heart—but there is a unique power in your look that draws me to you; there is a fire in your soul and in your eyes that draws me to you as the sun attracts the earth. Daughter of the sun you are indeed, with all his reddish rays concentrated in your being, as in the burning gem,

your family namesake. Garnet, oh, Garnet, I rave still, and more insanely than before. Garnet, restore peace, calmness, self-possession, and reason to my soul! Give your peerless self to me! Be my salvation! Speak to me! Answer me! Say something, oh, dear Garnet!"

Her lightning anger, quick to subside as to flash forth, had died away. As he held her hands, kissing them and almost weeping over them, she answered, in a low voice: "Alas! Mr. Hardcastle, what shall I say? What can I say, that I have not said with pain before this? I feel honored by your esteem; I feel grateful for your love; I feel humbled that I cannot return it. It is no disparagement to you—it is a misfortune, perhaps, to me—that I cannot do so. One cannot always admire what may be admirable, or esteem what may be estimable, still less can they always love what is lovable. Yet I am disposed to entertain a profound friendship for you. My dear guardian, cease then to torment yourself and me farther with this question. I cannot marry," she said, gently but firmly, as she sank into the chair behind her.

"Cannot marry!" he repeated, rising and throwing himself upon a sofa near her. "Cannot marry! Have you then made a vow of celibacy? Has your convent education imbued you with that notion?"

"No; Heaven forbid! I have formed no resolution of leading a single life. I should not be happy in such a destiny, should not even if I were already blessed with father and mother, sisters and brothers, cousins and friends—how could I possibly expect to be, standing perfectly alone as I do? I have a sisterly affection for you—not love! There be many affections; but only one love! only one—marriage."

He had restrained himself as long as it was possible to do so. He now started from the sofa where he had reclined, watching her with pale cheeks and burning gaze, and, starting toward her with clenched fist, he exclaimed:

"Yes, haughty girl, you speak truth; there is but one marriage—for you! You are compelled to marry me! The world expects it of you. Is not the will of your benefactor known? Are we not generally supposed to be

betrothed? Did we not make the tour of Europe alone together? The world expects you to marry me. And you will forever lose the respect of the world by failing to do so."

Her brow crimsoned, her eyes blazed. She arose to her feet and answered slowly:

"And I would rather lose the respect of the world by rejecting you than deserve to lose it by accepting you."

"Fool! Have you no regard for your reputation?"

"Yes; but think it wrong to secure good reputation at the expense of good character."

"What paradox, what nonsense is that?"

"Oh! they are not synonymous terms, character and reputation; on earth they never have been, on earth they never will be. Often they are antagonistic words. Many of the heroes and martyrs of history, the demigods of our adoration, were men of the best characters, with —while they lived—the worst reputations."

"Then you have no respect for the good opinion of the world?"

"Yes! my aspiring heart! too much, I fear, for my soul's good; and I know, I know by all the glorious gifts of Heaven to me, I know by all my mighty power for good or ill, by all my absolute unswerving will to good, I know that I have a right and title, Heaven-patented, not to the passive good opinion, but to the honor, the co-operation of the world."

"And I tell you, haughty woman, as you stand here a very goddess of pride, I tell you as you stand here beneath these halls, where you should never have stood, invested with all this power, that you should never have possessed, armed with the might of vast wealth and of high talent, arrayed in the magic charms of young womanhood and perfect beauty—I tell you, that you are now—naught that you will be, unless you marry me—a suspected, proscribed, banned, outcast woman!" He expected this to overwhelm her. But she turned her large, dark, solemn eyes, solemn now with prophetic inspiration, upon him, and inquired calmly:

"Why?"

"Listen, girl. You are ambitious, arrogant, scornful. Yet a few words from me will subdue all that, by showing you that you are obliged to marry me. Attend! we made the tour of Europe alone together, putting up at the same hotels, having a common parlor, a common table, a common carriage——"

"Well, sir! That is easily understood in guardian and ward."

"Not when the guardian is a man of thirty-seven and the ward a girl of twenty; not when

"'Both are young and one is beautiful,'"

he added sneeringly. "Often, you know it, we were mistaken for a married pair——"

"And for brother and sister," she added, the blood mounting to her brow.

"Which we were not. Now attend! All that familiarity may be understood in a guardian and ward, who are, besides, known to be betrothed to each other, and who keep their tacit promise to society by marriage. Now, listen! if you should not consent to marry me——"

"If I do not! I will not. There is no if."

"Then all your beauty, wealth, and talent, with all the power they give you, avail you nothing. You are an outcast!"

She dropped into her chair again, she paled even to her lips, the fire died out of her eyes, and even from every lurid ring of her dark, bright hair. He gazed at her ironically, saying slowly:

"Ah! you do not care for the opinion of the world."

"Do I not?" she exclaimed, with sudden and impassioned energy, "do I not aspire to the honor of all the world? Do I not know and feel by all that I am and have, and by all that I purpose to do and to be, that I have a God-given patent to such honor? Has not my soul prophesied it?"

"And I repeat to you, haughty woman, that unless you marry me, you will not have it. Your powers are all paralyzed."

She dropped her hands upon her lap, her head upon her bosom, in the collapse of despair.

"Ha! trapped, palsied, helpless!" he exclaimed exultingly. "Where is now your vaunted independence? your pride? your scorn? Gone! quite gone! Why, so much the better. You will make the better wife for the loss of that. Come, Garnet, I love you; could worship your beauty, sometimes, only that it seems to spoil you; come, I love you. Let us cease this absurd quarrel and be friends. Come, do not look so despairingly. Harsh and stern as I may be when threatened with your loss, I shall not make such a bad husband. And for the rest—bless me, girl, you know my family and my standing—shall I be such a very ill match for General Garnet's——"

He paused, and she raised her deathlike brow, and, wiping the cold drops of sweat from its pallid surface, said slowly, and with profound sadness:

"Oh-h-h! You miserably misconceive my grief. It is this that overwhelms me; it is the thought of your——"

"Villainy! Speak out, I will relieve you!" he said sarcastically.

"I did not mean to use the word."

"Policy, then! for it was no more nor less; only finish."

"It is this, then, that crushes me with sorrow—the knowledge that you, my only protector, who should have warned my inexperience against the least social mistake, and shielded my good name from the slightest chance of injury; that you, my guardian, having perfect authority over me, and indisputable control of all my actions; that you, my friend, having my perfect confidence and affection, that you should have abused that authority, betrayed that confidence, and wounded that affection by leading me into a course of conduct pre-calculated, pre-contrived, to fetter my choice in woman's dearest privilege, or to blast my fair fame and palsy my powers of usefulness forever!"

"Rave on! be abusive, scornful, insulting as you please.

But I tell you, arrogant woman, that he whom you abuse, insult, and scorn will be your husband yet."

"And I tell you, insolent man!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet with all the fire of her nature burning in her cheeks, and blazing in her eyes, "I tell you that, wronged, suspected, proscribed, outcast as I may be; and add to that, poor, friendless, ill, persecuted, desolate as I may be, I could not fall so low as to become the wife of the wretch you are. I repel your pretensions with scorn and loathing. Begone!"

He gazed at her in speechless amazement. Was this incarnate storm, his ward? the dignified, self-restraining, self-governing Miss Seabright? Yes, the violent passions of her nature, restrained for many years, had now burst the bonds of moral power. The volcanic tide of fire that had ebbed and flowed, and been repressed through all this scene, had now broken forth in appalling power. Her form was erect—her nostrils dilated—her brow was crimson, her eyes blazed and darkened, and blazed and darkened with terrific rapidity.

"Begone!" she thundered; "out of my sight, or by the Heaven that made me, I will summon my slaves and have you thrust forth with contumely from my gates!" Her hand was on the bell, her insane purpose was indubitable.

With a gesture of desperation he rushed from the room.

She gazed after him until he had closed the door. She stood motionless a long, long time, while the tide of fire ebbed; then, sinking with the reaction of the exhaustion and self-reproach, she covered her face with her hands, murmuring in heart-broken tones, "God pity me! God forgive me! What a nature is mine! With a heart and bosom torn, tortured, convulsed by storms of ferocious anger, scorn, and pride, yet with a spirit brooding highly, calmly over all—as above the clouds, and thunder, and lightning of the earth shine the holy stars of heaven."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LIGHT ON THE ISLAND.

Her wretched brain gave way,
And she became a wreck at random driven,
Without one glimpse of reason or of Heaven.

LONG remained Miss Seabright with her head bowed upon her hand in bitter thought. Twice a servant came and announced dinner without her seeing or hearing him. The third time, when he approached and spoke close to her ear, she raised her head languidly and said:

"Ask Miss Joe to dine without me."

And when Miss Joe herself came in with anxious inquiries about her health, and affectionate offers of tea and toast and jellies, she answered, with a bitter smile:

"Oh, be easy, dear friend; a little fasting will not hurt my flesh and blood!"

Day waned, and still she maintained her silent and thoughtful posture. Night came, and a servant entered with candles. The glare of light aroused her, and, looking up, she saw the dark face of the man turned ashen gray with fear. "What is the matter, Cæsar?"

"Light on de island, miss; you kin see it plain as star a-shinin'!"

"Light on the island? Well, I will go and see myself. Where can this light be seen from?"

"From the garret window, miss, sure as you're born."

"Go on before me," she said, rising from her recumbent posture, and following the man up the several flight of stairs to the attic.

Arrived there, in the very front room where Elsie had been a prisoner on the last night of her stay at Mount Calm, they paused.

Miss Seabright advanced to the window, threw it up, and looked out at the clear, brilliant, starlight night. There was not a breath of wind stirring. The air was still and cold. The rolling hills and plains white with

snow, and intersected only by the belt of forest around the foot of Mount Calm, reached silently on to the dark boundary of the sea.

"Why, I see no light at sea; none anywhere except the myriad lights of stars in heaven!" said Miss Seabright, letting down the window.

"Bress your soul, miss, no more you can't; leastwise you puts out de candle and looks t'rough the spy-glass!"

"Why, here's a fellow who, not having causes of trouble enough near him, must put out the light and take a telescope to find out distant ones! Well, set the candle outside the door, and give me the glass." And taking the telescope she went again to the window and hoisted it. "Yes," she said, after taking sight, "yes, there is a light shining still and clear, and apparently fixed near the ruins of the old lodge!"

"Oh, it can be seen plain as possible from the village," said Miss Joe, who now entered, followed by other members of the household.

Miss Seabright closed the window, and, turning to the assembled group, said, with her singular smile:

"Well, now, this is really a very small affair for conjecture, and could interest none but a country family in the depth of winter. Let us go downstairs. It is probably some poor, lone soul, who, having no shelter, has put together the ruins of the old lodge and lives there and supports himself by fishing and shooting."

"Yes," said Miss Joe, "that might be well enough, and nobody thinks nothing of it, only you see, honey, the folks from the village have been over on the island in the broad daytime sarching, and they can't find the leastest signs of human habitations; the poor, dear old lodge is more tumble-downder than ever, as in course it must naterally be every winter, with no one to keep the dear, old crippled thing on its legs. Lord, child, the neighbors from Huttontown found all so desolute that the very stars of heaven were shining down into the water collected in the cellar. No roof, no chimneys, no floors even; nothing but the lonesome, desolute walls and the stagnant cellar. They didn't find anybody, nor any sign

of anybody, though they searched all over the island—but, mind, that was at sunset, and that night about dark the light blazed up there as bright as ever!"

"Why did not the neighbors go and search then?"

"They did. They got into the boats and rowed straight back, watching the ghostly light all the time, and just afore they landed it was out."

"Did they carry a light in their boats?"

"Certain."

"Then the great problem is solved. It was some fugitive slave, a refugee on the island, who, seeing the approach of the boats by the lights they carried, extinguished his light and concealed himself."

"As if he could. Lor', child, where could he hide away on that island? All plain and bare, and bleak as it is; no bit o' woods, no hollow; nothing but the outside walls o' the old lodge, with its cellar full o' water, and the lonesome, bare trees standin' far apart like ghosts."

"True, very true; there is not a hiding place possible on the island. But I cling to the thought of the fugitive refugee, who, seeing the invaders, probably extinguished his light and took boat for the open sea."

"No, honey, that w'a'nt it. Bless you, they thought of that at once, and lit more pine knots, and separated, and run all around the coast of the little islet, and flashed their lights about, and couldn't see sign of a boat on the waters."

"Then I am at the end of conjecture. Come, let us go down. It is cold up here. Take up the candle, Cæsar," said Miss Seabright, turning to go from the room.

"Yes, let's go down; it is so cold up here. And supper's ready in the little red parlor. That's what I come to tell you, when these niggers all followed me. I told Milly, long as you hadn't eat any dinner, and felt sort o' low spirited, to get supper airly, and br'il a pair of pa'tridges. A cup o' good, strong Young Hyson tea, with light biscuits and br'iled pa'tridges, is very good for lowness o' spirits. I knows it, 'cause I've tried it myself."

They hurried through the bleak passages, and downstairs.

Miss Seabright, preceded by the servant bearing the candle, and followed by the old lady, entered the parlor. The comfortable little parlor, with its thick carpet, heavy curtains, soft sofa, bright fire, and elegant tea table, was certainly a specific for mere low spirits. The old lady bustled past Garnet, and set the urn upon the table, burning her fingers slightly, and rubbing them, while she exclaimed cheerily:

"There now, sit down. As there's no one here but you and me, you know, you can draw the end of the sofy to the table and loll on that, while I pour out your tea and butter you a biscuit. Cæsar, you cut up that pa'tridge for your young mist'ess—not that one, you stupid creetur! t'other one, it's the plumpest. Now you see, honey, the maids have got through their day's work, for a wonder, and I have got time to stay in the parlor and enjoy myself 'long o' you. And so we'll have a jolly good evening; you can loll on the sofa and enjoy yourself with your low spirits and cologne bottle—only don't waste it—and I can sit here and patch my old gown, and talk about old times."

Garnet looked at the good-natured face of the old lady, and felt compunction for the answer she was about to make.

"I am sorry to spoil the plan of your evening's entertainment, Miss Joe, but I am going to explore Hutton's Island to-night."

"Going to explore Hutton's Island to-night!" exclaimed Miss Joe, dropping knife and fork, and staring at her.

"Yes."

"You!"

"Yes."

"The Lord have mercy upon her! I've been havin' of my misgivin's all this time, but now I know she's a little deranged!" said Miss Joe to herself. Then speaking aloud, in something of the tone one would take in addressing a sick and delirious child, "No, no, honey,

don't think of it! You're sick, you know, and it is cold and dark and dangerous. Then, it isn't proper for a young lady to do such a thing, anyhow!"

Miss Seabright smiled a queer smile, as she replied:

"For the first objections, my good old friend, cowardice is not one of my weaknesses; for the last"—she paused and her smile deepened in meaning—"I made a start in life by quite innocently perpetrating a heinous, a fatal—crime? no, impropriety! I broke no law of God or man; yet I am told that for all that I shall be banished from society unless I do commit a sin, in open day, in the face of society; who will then forgive me!"

"Mad! mad!" said Miss Joe to herself, gazing at the ironical girl.

"Well!

"'What's *banished* but yet free?'

I will do whatever I please—conventional or unconventional! I will break no law of God's or man's, and after that is said, all is said for me. For the rest, I will do whatever my spirit impels me to do, whether the world likes it or not!" said Garnet, speaking more to herself than to another, and rising and ringing the bell.

"Mad! mad! mad! and getting worse every minute," said Miss Joe, hurrying out, and hastening into the front hall, where Cæsar was lighting the lamp.

"Cæsar, come here to me, quick—close. Hush! don't say anything. Go as hard as you can to Hemlock Hollow, and tell Mr. Lionel Hardcastle how he must come as fast as possible here; how he's wanted badly, very badly. Hurry—mount a fast horse, and go as quick as ever you can!"

The man, with his eyes staring wide, ran to obey. Miss Joe then returned to the parlor, where she found Garnet giving directions to a servant to have two horses saddled, and prepare himself to attend her down to the shore. Miss Seabright was giving her orders with so much calmness and precision that the old lady thought she had a lucid interval in her madness, and that this

afforded her an excellent opportunity for argument; so, as soon as the man retired, she said coaxingly:

"My dear child, think of it!"

"I do, Miss Joe; and the more I think of it the more I want to go. I am determined to vary the tedious monotony of my days with a little adventure!"

"My dear child, you have heard of the fate of Agnes! How she was either murdered or carried off from that island by unknown ruffians!"

"I heard long ago of her mysterious disappearance, Miss Joe, and I always thought, and think now, that in her deep despair for the sudden loss of her husband she drowned herself. I think so the more that never before or since that strange occurrence, has any outrage been attempted on the island. Think of the years we lived there alone with nothing to disturb our quiet. Why, often in the fond superstition of my childhood, when I have waked up in the night, have I risen and gone out into the starlight, and rambled all over the isle in the hope of surprising the fairies at their midnight revels! Well, if I never found them, I never found anything worse. No, Miss Joe, there is no danger. If there were, I do not know the fear of it. That solitary light on the isle belongs to some solitary wretch, poorer and more friendless even than we were; one whose misfortunes or crimes make him dread and shun the approach of his fellow-men; one whom I do not fear to seek; one whom, if I find, I shall try to relieve. And I will tell you, if that will ease your kind anxiety upon my account, I will direct Pompey to take a pair of pistols."

As she finished speaking a servant appeared at the door, and announced that the horses were ready.

She left the parlor, and soon returned prepared for her ride, and immediately set out.

Miss Joe fidgeted up and down the hall in great disturbance of mind. In about ten minutes after Miss Seabright had left the house the quick trampling of horses announced the arrival of Lionel Hardcastle. He hurried into the house, booted and spurred as he was, and asked rapidly:

"Where is Miss Seabright? Has she sent for me?"

"No, sir; no. It was me that sent for you. Come here—here in the parlor, sir. I have got something terrible to tell you. Shut the door."

He followed her into the parlor, closing the door as requested, and stared with astonishment at the old lady's excited countenance, while with rapid enunciation she related all that had happened just before and since his visit in the forenoon. Miss Seabright's excited manner, her mad resolution of going that night to Hutton's Island to find out about the light, and above all her "real crazy" talking about committing a sin before the world in order "to keep in long o' the world." Mr. Hardcastle listened with a sarcastic smile until he heard of her night expedition; then his sinister face lighted up with demoniac joy, to conceal which he quickly averted his head.

"Ha! with only one attendant, say you?"

"With no one, sir, but Pomp—sure as you're born."

"I must instantly go after her then."

"Oh, do, sir! do hurry!" said Miss Joe, and in five minutes more Lionel Hardcastle, with the dark and lowering brow of a fiend hidden by the night, was galloping swiftly toward the coast, muttering in his heart: "Now, scornful girl, shall my love and vengeance both be sated!"

In the meantime Garnet had reached the shore at which the Mount Calm fleet of boats were chained—boats of all sizes, from the long skiff to the twelve-oared canoe and the sail-boat. She entered the smallest of the skiffs, followed by Pompey, who immediately unlocked the chain, took the single oar, and pushed off from the sandy beach. The bay was perfectly smooth, and reflected the dark, resplendent sky, with its myriads beyond myriads of shining lights so distinctly that the little skiff seemed to glide among the stars as it sped over the waters. Soon before then lay Hutton's Island, like a darker line upon the sea. And there, like a single star, shone the solitary light! Yet so much deeper was Garnet's love of nature than of adventure, that she de-

livered herself up to intense enjoyment of the starlight night on the waters, forgetful of her errand, until the slight shock of the skiff, touching upon the strand of the island, aroused her from her trance. Then, when she looked up, the light on the isle was gone.

"That is very provoking! Now who would have thought that darkly and silently as we came we should have been perceived? However, light your pine knot, Pompey, and come along."

Pompey had been selected as her attendant in this expedition by Miss Seabright, as being the least superstitious and cowardly of all her men, yet now the namesake of "The Invincible" shrank back in dread, muttering:

"Indeed, indeed, miss, you'd better not!"

"Pompey! whoever the dweller on this isle is, it is some poor wretch, more worthy of our pity than of our fear; weak and timid, since it watches and hides from even such harmless visitors as we. Come along!"

"'Deed—'deed, miss, that aint good reasonin'! 'Deed, 'fore my Heavenly Marster, aint, miss. 'Deed—'deed—'deed—'deed——" muttered Pompey, his teeth chattering, until he lost his voice.

"Give me the torch then, Pompey; I will go before. You may follow me as distantly as you please, and run at the first alarm!"

"I think that would be the mos' safes', miss; caze dey wouldn't be so apt to shoot a young lady, miss, as they would to shoot a colored gemman ob my siteration in deciety."

Without hearing Pompey's compromise with his cowardice and his conscience, Miss Seabright, torch in hand, walked up the gradually ascending rise of ground to the ruins of the old lodge. From being so long out in the night her eyes had become accustomed to it, so that now, under the brilliant starlight, the scene was distinctly, though darkly, before her—the ruin, the isle, and the sea. No sign of fence or outhouse could be seen as she approached the ruined lodge, whose skeleton walls stood up square around what seemed a deep, stagnant pond,

whose stillness was drearily broken by the plunge of some toad, snake, or other loathsome reptile. Blinded or scared by the glare of the torch, bats flitted to and fro about the ruined walls, water rats ran in and out among the broken stones, and plunged into the stagnant waters, and lastly, a huge screech-owl took flight from the blasted tree by the fallen chimney, "making night hideous" with his yells. Profoundly saddened by seeing the beloved home of her wild childhood so desolate, Garnet turned silently away, and passing mournfully over the bleak ground, reached the strand. Then passing slowly all around the beach, she looked out upon the waters in search of any stray boat that might contain the supposed fugitive of the isle. As far as the eye could reach no sign of a boat could be seen. She then turned inland —if the tiny isle could be said to have an inland—and searched carefully about, walking around every specter-like tree standing far apart on the bare, bleak island, and quite incapable after all of concealing the smallest possible fugitive in the human shape. But she looked around and up into them, as I have seen men look under candlesticks and into tiny drawers for their missing hats, umbrellas, and boot-jacks! After her thorough search was quite over she turned to her attendant, and said:

"Well, I am disappointed. There is positively no one here, and the mystery of the island light is still unsolved."

Her attendant did not answer. Thinking that he was still under the influence of fear, she said:

"Why, Pompey, we are as safe and as quiet here as I was when I lived here with Aunt Joe and Hugh."

Still her follower did not speak, but rather lingered behind her, and she herself relapsed into silence, and fell into a reverie, until she arrived at the farthest extremity of the isle, opposite to that on which she had landed This was the northwestern point of the island, and the same beach upon which she and the sole companion of her childhood, Hugh, used to pick maninosies. Here, as she walked about watching the starlit waves break gently on the beach, noting the numerous perforations,

where the maninosies had buried themselves in the sand, the tide of memory rolled back, overwhelming the apprehension of the present. She saw herself, a tiny, sprite-like child, stealing out on starlight nights, and sitting on the pile of rocks, on this very spot, watching in fond faith for the swimming of the nereids, and mistaking the reflection of some purple cloud, high up in the heavens, for the royal robe of Amphytrite in the "deep, deep sea." She saw herself again in the day-time, when the setting sun, like Macbeth's blood-crimsoned hand, would

> "The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green one red!"

she saw herself well shod and warmly clothed, and Hugh, the manly boy, barefooted, bareheaded, and coarsely clad, yet grandly handsome "as Hercules ere his first labor!" Hugh, with his noble look and noble nature; and she smiled to think of the high faith, and hope, and love that irradiated his fine countenance, as he confidently promised to make a fortune for her, his sister; to get wealth, rank, honor for her! And the tears rolled down Garnet's cheeks, as she thought of the glorious boy, and thought how many, many years it had been since she had even inquired his residence or his destiny.

"He thought," she said, speaking to herself in a low-self-communing voice, "he thought to have made a fortune before me—to have conferred wealth, rank, honor upon me! The case might be reversed—it might! oh! I wish it could! There is only one way in which it could, and that is not impossible, though remote. This dream that I have enshrined within my heart—this ideal of goodness and greatness with which only I will unite —this I owe to Hugh. And oh! if he has fulfilled in his manhood the glorious promise of his boyhood, whatever his external fate may be, if he has fulfilled in himself the promise of matured goodness and greatness—then——"

"What then?" said a deep voice at her elbow.

She started slightly, and exclaimed:

"My guardian!"

"Yes, Miss Seabright, your guardian; who never found you more in need of his guardianship than at present."

"Sir! why have you followed me here?—where is my servant?"

"Having come upon him, cowering, several yards behind you, I took the liberty of sending him back to the mainland, by the boat in which you came!"

Garnet's eyes began to blaze and darken with fearful rapidity. Yet repressing the mounting fire of anger, she strove to ask calmly:

"And why did you 'take the liberty' of sending my servant away, sir? And why have you further presumed to break upon my privacy?"

"One question at a time, if you please, Miss Seabright. I sent your servant away that I might have the pleasure of a private interview. I break upon your solitude for the furtherance of the same purpose."

"And your object, sir?"

"To come to a full and final reckoning with you!" he said, his manner suddenly becoming threatening.

Garnet pressed both hands upon her bosom, to restrain its violent throbbings, and answered slowly:

"I thought, sir, that our last interview, of only this morning, had finally settled all between us? Upon that occasion I told you some harsh truths—and with some violence, which I regret; feeling sorry that the honest verdict of my head and heart should not have been delivered with more temperance."

"And which you shall more deeply regret before we part, scornful girl."

Her eyes blazed wide and full, like sudden meteors, and then fell into darkness, as she replied, with constrained calmness:

"I pray you, sir, do not provoke me. I am subject to anger, as other people are to ague and fever."

"Ha, ha, ha! Is that meant for an appeal or for a threat? If for an appeal, I am not subject to magnanimity, as other people are to insanity!—if for a threat, how ridiculous! Be angry—furious—violent! What

can you do now? Why, thou foolish girl, thou art completely in my power."

"In your power! Not so, insolent creature, 'whom it were base flattery to call a man'; there are no circumstances whatever that could put me in your power."

"Why, you absurd woman! look around you. Deep and silent night hangs over the world. You stand alone with me upon a barren, uninhabited, sea-girt isle. How far off do you suppose the nearest human being is from us? How loud a shriek from this lone spot could raise the distant sleepers of the mainland from their beds?"

Garnet raised her proud head to give some indignant answer, but meeting the gaze of her companion, the burning, scathing anger of her reply froze in horror ere it passed her lips—for never did night lower over a countenance darker, more dreadful with demoniacal malignity of purpose. Garnet turned her eyes from the baleful glare of Hardcastle to throw them over the lone and desert isle on which they stood, and for the first time a sense of the appalling danger of her situation swam in upon her brain, and for a moment nearly overwhelmed her. His countenance lighted up with a fiendish triumph. He continued:

"Yes, Miss Seabright. Yes, Garnet. You have read my look and purpose aright. This night must you and I come to a reckoning. This hour, haughty girl, shall your pride be humbled. To-day you rejected my hand with scorn. To-morrow shall you sue for it as for life. Ha! already my triumph begins. You grow pale, lady."

"No!—pale? If my cheek did so belie my soul as to grow pale before a wretch like you, by my soul, I would paint it black for the rest of my life, and sell myself to base servitude as being too low for any other sphere. Oh, sir! the sudden revelation of your enormous wickedness shocked me for a single instant, as if I had unexpectedly been confronted with the foul fiend—that was all! And now I tell you that even on this lone sea isle I do not feel myself to be in your power. I am not the least afraid of you! Afraid of you? I am afraid of noth-

ing. I do not know the word. I never did know it; and it is not likely that you can teach it to me."

"By Heaven, she defies me even here!" exclaimed Hardcastle, pale with rage, and striding toward her.

"Yes," said Garnet, recoiling a step or two, and standing upon the fragment of rock where she had so often sat in childhood; "yes," she said, reverently raising her eyes and hand, "by Heaven, I do defy you! Under the protection of Heaven, in the name of Heaven, I do defy you!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Thou fool! Why, what shall hinder me now from refuting you and taking my revenge?" he said, again striding toward her.

"Off! A parley, I say! Listen to me a moment. God! myself! yourself shall hinder you. Mr. Hardcastle, I have this hour conquered a greater and stronger adversary than yourself—even mine own spirit! I have overcome my anger; I have the lion of my temper chained beneath my feet. And now, to put you down will be a much lighter task—much easier victory. And I tell you now, in coolness, what I told you before in heat, that I am not afraid of you. Nor shall you falsely take the tone toward me of one who has the advantage. I know you, Mr. Hardcastle. And I know your present evil scheme by your former revealed treachery. Heaven purify my soul from the sin of the knowledge! I know that you now think you have me at your mercy, and intend to terrify me into making conditions with you."

"In the fiend's name, young woman, what do you mean?"

"This, to be explicit: You think to fright me, Garnet Seabright, into the promise to become your wife, and endow you with the broad lands of Mount Calm, upon condition of your sparing me, showing mercy to me, and taking me safely home to Mount Calm."

"By all the demons, girl! I wonder that you should dare to give breath to that fear!"

"Not fear!"

"To that suspicion, then. I am amazed that you should venture to place these conditions before me."

"That I should detect and pluck the villainous scheme from your heart, and hold it up before you. Well, I will go further in my defiance of you, Mr. Hardcastle, and tell you that, threaten what you may, I will never, under any circumstances, promise to be your wife. Now, you see that I know I am not at your mercy."

"By Satan, Miss Seabright, I am thunderstruck at your audacity! Girl, you would be but a sparrow in my grasp! Who could rescue you?"

"I thank you for the word you used in illustration of my weakness. It recalls in good time the words of a favorite old volume of mine—a book, perchance, with which you have not chanced to meet. Listen! 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Verily, I say unto you, not one of these shall fall to the ground without your Father. Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?' Heaven pardon me! I should not have quoted Scripture here, Mr. Hardcastle. Nevertheless, it helps to make me fearless now. Sir, I will tell you once for all why I do not fear you. First, because I trust in God. Next, because I trust in myself. Finally, because I can somewhat trust in you! Cut off as we now are from all communion with our fellow-creatures—alone, defenseless, unprotected, and at your mercy as I seem—you dare not harm me, and I know and feel it! You are not mad or intoxicated; therefore, you will not. You are not of a passionate, impetuous nature, therefore you will not. You are a cold-blooded, clear-headed, calculating, forecasting schemer—therefore you will not dare to do me an injury that will end in ruin to yourself. You are a gentleman by birth, education, and position. You are a gentleman—however undeserving of the name—and you will not exchange the title for that of—felon! I am under the protection of God and of the laws! Lay but your hand in insult on me, and by the Heaven that watches over us, as soon as I reach the mainland, cost what it may to my woman's heart, for the sake of sacred right will I denounce you! Murder me—sink my body in the sea! —the crime would still be traced to yourself. We were known to have been left here alone."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! We were known to be left here alone together! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! By none but the negro, and a negro's evidence is not received in any court of law! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, in fiendish triumph. "I have allowed you to spring from my hands, and I have listened to your talking, only to make game of you. Only as a cat lets a mouse run before finally seizing it. But this has lasted long enough!" he exclaimed, ferociously springing toward her, seizing and hurling her from the rock.

Summoning all her great strength the intrepid girl, with a mighty effort, threw him from her, and before he could spring upon his prey again the fragment of rock near them rolled down the slope to the beach—a sudden light glared upon the scene, and a tall woman, wildly clad, and waving a torch above her head, emerged, and stood before them. The sudden irruption of this human being from the bosom of the earth did not astonish Garnet as did the look of Lionel Hardcastle. Struck pale as death, and statue-still, but for the universal tremor that shook his frame, he stood and gazed with stony eyes and chattering teeth upon the apparition. At last:

"Agnes!" he gasped, shaking as with an ague fit.

"Yes, pirate!—Agnes!" said the woman, approaching him slowly, holding the torch above her head; then stooping, fixing her eyes intently upon him, and thus creeping toward him, as a lioness preparing for a couch and spring. She paused before him, and still glaring on his face, said very slowly: "So, pirate! we meet again, at last! We meet upon the spot of that outrage which first separated me from home and country, friends and kindred, holiness and heaven! We meet upon this spot that you would again desecrate with crime! We meet in an hour of retribution! For this have I lived! For now that at last I see my mortal foe, never will I lose sight of you again until I have put you in the hands of justice! Never will I cease to pursue you, until I hunt you to the scaffold! Never can I die, until I see you dead before me by the death of a felon!"

While she spoke with such slow tones of settled hatred and determined vengeance he held his hand in his bosom. As she ceased speaking:

"False prophetress! You die now!" he thundered, leveling the pistol he held at her head.

She sprang forward, seized his arm, turning the weapon aside. They struggled violently for a moment, and then the pistol was discharged, and Lionel Hardcastle fell, shot through the chest.

Frozen with horror Garnet Seabright drew near, and stooped over the fallen man. Agnes also bent over her prostrate foe for a moment, then turning to Garnet, and throwing her wild hair back, she said:

"I did not kill him, madam, though if I had 'twould have been but just."

The eyes of the dying man flared open once, and fixed upon the face of Garnet. Raising himself upon his elbow, he said, in low and broken tones:

"Forgive me, Garnet—and—believe this!—whatever were the hidden sins of my youth—neither piracy nor bloodshed were among them! I was a—prisoner among them! Ship—wreck—plank—waves—picked up—oh, God, forgive me!" His head fell back—he rolled over in a mortal struggle, and then grew still in death.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BEEHIVE.

A cottage where domestic love
And truth breathe simple kindness to the heart,
Where white-armed children twine the neck of age,
Where hospitable cares light up the hearth,
Cheering the lonely traveler on his way.

—*Gilman.*

"THE BEEHIVE" was the name that had been given by Elsie to her first backwoods home, and afterward transferred by her to the substantial home of hewn rock that had replaced the log cabin.

It is late in the afternoon of a blustering March day that I shall again introduce you into the household of Dr. Hardcastle. And it is a large and interesting family for which the doctor is now responsible.

First, there is himself, as glorious a type of manhood as ever stood in the exposed outer circle of existence, interposing his own body between the storms and cares of life and the cowering forms of women and children.

Then, there was his pupil, Hugh Hutton—

> "As tall, as sinewy, and as strong
> As earth's first kings—the Argo's gallant sailors;
> Heroes in history, and gods in song,"

and bearing, in that genial dignity of form, countenance, and manner which was the natural expression of great conscious power and goodness, a general resemblance to his master.

There was Mrs. Garnet, in her simple widow's dress of black silk, with surplice bosom, inside handkerchief, and little lace cap—somewhat jaded, yet with her graceful form, fair complexion, delicate features, and pensive thoughtfulness of expression, presenting a pleasing image of the "intellectual system of beauty." In charming contrast to her was her daughter, Mrs. Hardcastle, in the full bloom of perfectly developed vital beauty, revealing that marriage and maternity had been to her healthful, sanguine, and joyous organization, what they should be to all women, a continuous accession of new life, health, and happiness.

She had made no mistake in the calculation of her future. Active, bustling, often very laborious her lot had been indeed, but suited to her strong and cheerful nature. Her life had been guided, besides, by almost unerring intelligence, sustained by undying love, and cheered by unfailing hope. Anxieties had come, indeed, but these had not been suffered to grow into corroding cares. Sorrow had visited them, too, but this had not been permitted to crush them with despair, or even bow them long in despondency. In the second year of their married life the Angel of Death had entered their dwell-

ing and lifted their only child from its mother's bosom. Yes, the firstling of their little flock—the first-born of their youthful love, the strong and beautiful child, so full of glorious promise, whose health and life seemed so secure, who was, besides, so watched and tended—that idolized child was borne away from their arms, and the hearts of the parents long writhed in the anguish of bereavement before they could understand and receive the divine message in the infant's little life and death. They had been so independent, so confiding, so happy in their earthly lot, so absorbed in their worldly plans, that they might never even have lifted their eyes to Heaven but for gazing after the soaring wing of their cherub; might never have lifted their hearts to Heaven, but for yearning after the ascended and glorified child; for " where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."

They had now been married eleven years, and six other children claimed their love and care; six children —boys and girls—with their ages ranging from one year old to nine. They were not rich. They owned the homestead, farm, and improvements upon the latter, but beyond this they did not possess a thousand dollars. Dr. Hardcastle's practice was very extensive, and very profitable to—his patients; not very enriching to himself. With a large and growing family, with a strong and sympathetic nature, generous heart, and open hand and purse, how could Magnus Hardcastle grow rich? Indeed he must have been much poorer than he was but for the efficient aid of his " woman-kind."

Mrs. Garnet had gradually assumed to herself the responsibility of the needlework of the family.

Elsie did all the housework.

Hugh Hutton constituted himself hewer of wood and drawer of water, stock-driver and feeder, gardener, assistant nurse and tutor, doctor's boy, big brother, and helper-in-general to the establishment.

And he found time, besides, for the systematic and assiduous study of medicine, so that within the last year he had been dubbed by the neighbors the young doctor of the professional firm.

For the last two years Hugh had spent the winters in an Eastern city, attending lectures at the Medical College. Upon these occasions he usually left home upon the 1st of December and returned upon the 1st of March. This was the last winter of his purposed migrations East, and his friends at home were expecting his return with unusual impatience. The 1st of March had come, however, and he had not yet arrived. A letter from him had informed his friends that he remained in the city for the purpose of presenting himself before the medical board of examination as a candidate for a diploma.

The family were now in daily expectation either of his arrival or of another letter. It was upon the evening of the 7th of March, then, that the commodious family room of the house was occupied by Mrs. Garnet and six children of Elsie's. This room was well warmed and lighted by a large fire of pine logs in the chimney, and a couple of lighted candles upon the mantelpiece. The supper table was set, and supper was ready to be served as soon as the doctor should get in from his rounds. It had not long to wait; for soon Dr. Hardcastle was seen to ride into the yard, dismount, and take off his saddle-bags and booted spurs, and, great coated as he was, came into the house. As soon as he set foot within the room the children swarmed upon him like bees upon a sunflower stalk, or the Lilliputians upon Gulliver; and he lifted and kissed them one by one, but looking around impatiently the while for one he loved even more than all these little ones—to wit, the mother. At last:

"Where is Elsie, Mrs. Garnet?" he asked.

"Gone again; I do wish, Magnus, you would prevent her. She makes herself a slave to these poor neighbors of hers. I do really think that she has family cares and toils enough; and that when she has performed her household duties as well as she always does, she might consider herself discharged from other social obligations I do wish you would talk to her very seriously about it. Now to-day she has had a very fatiguing time indeed; she was ironing all the forenoon, and this afternoon baking. And yet this evening, as soon as she had got supper and

set the table, she placed the children all in my care, and against my advice, high as the wind is, and deep as the snow is drifted, she took a basket and filled it with provisions, and started to carry it to those poor Millers on the mountain. Indeed, I wish, Magnus, you would tell her not to do it."

"Me tell Elsie to do or not to do! Whew! Do you know, my dear lady-mother, what is the highest, the very highest boon of God to man? Free will—the blessed liberty of going even to the old Nick if they please. There are those so fond of 'freedom,' that they would prefer going to perdition by the exercise of their free will to being arbitrarily predestined to heaven!"

"Perhaps so; but Elsie is not one of those, Dr. Hardcastle. If you were but to hint to your wife that you disapprove and dislike her thus exposing herself, she would stop it at once; she would think it her duty to do so."

"I know it; and therefore I have to be more chary in meddling with her docile spirit than if she had the self-will and temper of Xantippe. But, ah! do you think it does not make my heart ache to see her expose herself to wind and snow, and to think that I have not yet provided a carriage for her, and to see her work from early morning till night, doing all the housework of the family, and think that I have not yet got a servant for her? And now having brought her to all this, shall I fetter her will? No, by my soul!" said Dr. Hardcastle, with strong emotion.

Mrs. Garnet arose and went to his side, and stood there, and drew his arm over her shoulder caressingly, as she said:

"Magnus, you have made Elsie completely, divinely happy; I mean, as a mortal woman can be! No man can do more for his wife, very few can do so much. As for her privations and toils, it is I, only I, whose weakness caused all that! It was I who disinherited her! I!"

"Hush! hush! a truce to self-criminations! Elsie is the only consistent, rational, equable one in the family, now Hugh is gone. And here she comes, the darling!

and without her cloak, as I live. Come, Mrs. Garnet, we will both scold her for that. Let's open upon her as soon as she gets in."

He kissed Alice's hand and hastened to meet his wife.

Here she came, cold as the weather was, actually without her cloak.

He opened the door quickly, and received her in his arms, pressing her cold hands under his chin, to his bosom, to warm them, and drawing her on toward the fire.

"Now where have you been, facing the wind, and plunging through the snowdrifts?"

"I have been on the mountain," said Elsie, untying her bonnet, and giving it to one child, and throwing her shawl upon the arms of another. "I have been on the mountain to see those poor Millers. Their little girl, almost barefooted, came over here this afternoon for me to go to her mother, who is confined. I knew they were suffering, and so I filled the basket and went home with the little one."

"But your cloak, dear! What in the world have you done with your cloak?"

"Oh! I laid it over Susan Miller and her babe, until I could come home, and send them a blanket. Oh, now don't look so shocked! I am warmly clothed without the cloak; besides, the distance was short, and I ran along fast. Nonsense, now! How is it that children are half their time out running and romping in the cold, without being wrapped up, and only grow more robust by the exposure?" said Elsie, laughing, as she arose, pushed her curls back from her blooming face, and went and lifted her crowing babe from the cradle.

Then she sat down and nursed it, while Mrs. Garnet, assisted by the eldest child, a little girl of nine years old, began to arrange the supper upon the table.

As Elsie sat and nursed the child, her blooming, joyous face softened into sadness, tears gathered in her eyes, and she sighed deeply, bowing her head over the babe. Magnus was watching her. He was accustomed to her occasional moods of sorrowful tenderness, which he said,

compared with her usual bright, cheerful temper as a general, steaming thaw contrasts with a fine, clear, frosty morning. He stooped over the back of her chair, and, bending his head close to hers, asked:

"Of what are you thinking so sadly, Elsie?"

A slight flush warmed her cheek, and she replied, meekly, without raising her head:

"An unworthy thought, dearest; at least, ungrateful and presumptuous. I was thinking of that poor family, of the little good that I was able to do them, and the great pleasure it gave me to do even that. I will confess to you all the egotism of my thought—then I thought how generous I really was by nature, and how I should delight in doing a great deal of good, if I had the means; and then an emotion of discontent, and a disposition to murmur, came upon me, and I thought what a pity it was that I, so really liberal by nature, should be compelled to repress so many generous impulses—that I should not have a fortune to spend—and I sighed from self-pity. I am ashamed that such ungrateful emotions should have disturbed my heart, and I speak of them now with shame, for now I feel how presumptuous they really were; for why, indeed, should I have a fortune, or anything else that we have not gained by our own toil? I, who am already so happy in the wealth of family affections, Magnus."

"Dear Elsie, if the material and temporal good of mankind were first to be thought of, doubtless then it were better that wealth should be in the hands of the benevolent and philanthropic. But such is not the case. It is the spiritual and eternal welfare both of the individual and of the race that is provided for; and hence each individual is placed in circumstances, not where he can do the most seeming good, but where he can best develop his moral and spiritual nature. Thus, you have benevolence. You do not need to have that virtue cultivated by the contrast of your own wealth with another's want, and by the exercise of almsgiving; hence, you are not schooled in prosperity and the duty of beneficence. But, Elsie, as you are not perfect, perhaps there are

other virtues you lack, and which can be developed only in poverty. But I did not mean to preach you a little sermon, darling. And now, in requital of prosing, I will tell you two pieces of good news—first, that as this is the last year in which we shall be put to any expense for Hugh's college course of lectures, we shall have a hundred or so dollars over our annual expenditures; half of this sum you shall disburse in judicious alms. That is my first piece of glad tidings, and my second is like unto it—Hugh himself will be home to-night."

"Hugh home to-night? Oh, you don't say so!"

"Yes; this afternoon, in post office, I got a letter that arrived yesterday. And this letter announces the arrival of Hugh this very evening."

"Hugh coming home this evening? Oh, I am so glad! Children, children, did you hear? Brother Hugh is coming home this evening."

"Brother Hugh is come!" said a pleasant voice, as the door opened, and Hugh Hutton stood among them.

All arose, and Magnus and Elsie hastened to meet him.

"Dear friends," he said, shaking hands right and left, "I could not resist the desire I felt to go to the window and look in upon you while you were all at your quiet evening occupations. I have been watching you for the last two minutes."

"You rogue! But come to the fire, come to the fire. Supper is just ready," said Dr. Hardcastle, while Hugh threw off his great coat, and laid it aside with his hat. "Oh, Hugh, we are so glad to see you! Had you a pleasant journey? What time did you get to the village? You have traveled day and night, I am afraid? And then you have walked from the village here?"

"Yes; I couldn't have got a horse for two or three hours; and I really couldn't wait, I was so eager to get home."

"Dear Hugh, you must be so tired and hungry! Here, sit down in this chair near the fire," said Elsie, pushing a chair forward with one hand, while she held the child with the other arm.

Hugh threw himself into the chair, and mechanically

stretched out his arms and took the crowing, laughing infant from its mother, and set it upon his knee, playing with it all the time he talked to others.

"Oh, have you got your diploma, Hugh? Let's see the document with our own eyes," said Dr. Hardcastle, coming forward.

"Yes; here it is," said Hugh, rooting in his pocket with one hand, while he hugged the baby up with the other. "Here it is. I took it out of my trunk to bring along as a sort of credential that your years of kindness have not been thrown away upon me, my best friend;" and Hugh produced the parchment, and laid it on the table.

"Good! good! Here it is, Elsie! Come, look! Here is Dr. Hutton's warrant to kill and cure, secundum artem. Here is the diploma. Here is the prize for which he has toiled so hard—the good of his race."

"No; not the good, but the great starting place. Is it not so, Hugh?" said Elsie, coming forward.

"Yes, true, the starting point. She is worthier than I. The starting point, my boy. And now for a brilliant career. Aim high, Hugh. He who aims at the sun may not bring it down, but his arrow will fly highest. You must be more successful than I have been, Hugh. I am a useful—if you please—an extensively useful member of my profession, and of society. You must be a distinguished honor to the faculty and the world. Oh! I have a grand ambition for you, Hugh, my son!"

"My dear friend! my best friend! all that I am and have I owe to you, to your patient, disinterested teaching of many years. Oh, yes! and all that I may become or may possess I shall still owe to you! Ah, Dr. Hardcastle! I speak of a debt! I shall never be able to pay the debt I owe to you."

"Why, Hugh!" replied Dr. Hardcastle, throwing his arm affectionately over the shoulder of his young friend, and speaking in a voice as harmonious and gentle as a woman's. "Why, Hugh! never let me hear another word of owing anything but brotherly love to me. You who have been my second self in all my labors and profes-

sional cares; a son to me, except that you have given me no anxiety, but much ease. My brother, companion, confidant! Why, whatever could I have done without you, Hugh? What could any of us have done without you? Mrs. Garnet! how could you have got along without your son, Hugh? Elsie! how could you have managed to conduct your domestic and business affairs without Hugh? Children! little ones, I say! what would you take for 'big brother'?"

The last-named little shareholders in the Hugh Hutton property swarmed around him, some with gentle, some with vociferous demonstrations of affection. And their mother laid her hands affectionately on his shoulders, and, looking up in his face, said:

"Dear Hugh! No! no one could possibly have supplied your place to us, since we have known you. You have been, indeed, like a younger brother, or an elder son of the family, only that, as the doctor says, instead of giving us trouble, you have relieved us of it. Oh, Hugh! our dear boy! only be half as eminent as we hope you will be, and we shall be so proud and happy in your success!"

"Come, come, Elsie, a truce to sentiment! Supper waits, and a man who has staged night and day for a week, and walked three miles to-night, must have a good appetite for his supper, and a strong disposition to his bed. Come; give the babe to his sister, there, and draw your chair up. The children have been suffered to sit up in honor of your arrival, Hugh. They are usually in bed at this hour. Come," said Dr. Hardcastle, seating himself at the table, when all the others were seated, "let's see! What have we here to tempt a traveler's appetite? Mocha coffee—some of that which you sent us by the wagon, Hugh—and cream and butter, such as Elsie only can make. Here are some buckwheat cakes; just try one. Our buckwheat has surpassed itself this year. There, I don't think you ever met with buckwheat cake like that in the city. Indeed, I don't think people east of the mountains know what good buckwheat really is. Take honey with your cake. There's honey for you.

The comb clear and clean like amber and frost. Our bees have distinguished themselves this season. There are venison steaks before you. Use the currant jelly with them, Hugh, it is better than the grape. That is the finest venison that I have seen this winter. Ah, Hugh, you should have been with me when I brought that stag down—shot him on the Bushy Ridge. Great fellow!—eight antlers—five inches of fat in the brisket! —weighing—how much did he weigh, Elsie? No matter. You are laughing, Hugh. What at, sir, pray?"

"At you, and myself, and stag-hunting, and deer-stalking, and story-tellings. The truth is, I never hear of stags and antlers, but I think of a fine, bragging tale I was cut short in while telling to my fellow-students at a little farewell supper given by them to me when I was coming away. I was trying to persuade some of them to come out here, and boasting of the country. I was launched into the midst of a grandiloquent eulogium. 'Glorious country, sir!' said I, 'glorious country! sublime mountains, piercing the clouds! mag-nif-i-cent forests stretching five hundred miles westward! splendid trees, sir, standing but two feet apart, their trunks measuring three yards in circumference! their luxurious branches inextricably intertwined! and game, sir! superb deer, with antlers six feet apart, bounding through those forests——' 'Where the trees grow but two feet apart, and their branches are inextricably entwined, how the very deuce do they manage to get through them, Hutton?' asked my friend, bringing my magniloquence to a sudden stand. I never was so disconcerted in my life. I knew I had been telling the truth, yet had made it sound like a fiction. At last I answered, 'By Dian, sir, that is their business, not mine, nor yours!'"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, pretty good! Yet, Hugh, you are not romancing. There are parts of the forest where the great trees grow in such thickets as you have described; but they are as impassable to the deer as to us, of course; and then there is superb game in the forest, which may never approach within miles of such thickets. Take another cup of coffee?"

"No, no, not any more," said Hugh, pushing up his plate and cup.

Mrs. Hardcastle gave the signal, and they arose from the table. The children had also finished their milk and bread, and their mother took them upstairs to be put to bed, while Mrs. Garnet washed up the tea things and Dr. Hardcastle replenished the fire.

When the table was cleared away, and Elsie had returned, and they were all gathered around the evening fireside, deeply engaged in telling and in hearing all that had happened to each during the winter's separation, Hugh suddenly clapped his hand to his pocket, with a "Lord bless my soul!"

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, was ever such absence of mind!"

"Never in the world, of course. Only what's it about?" laughed Dr. Hardcastle.

"Why, a letter—a letter that came in the same stage with myself—a letter from Huttontown, for you. I took it out of the office, and—indeed, I hope I have not lost it," continued Hugh, fumbling first in one pocket and then in another. "Oh, here it is," he exclaimed, producing the letter, and handing it to the doctor.

"The superscription is in a strange hand, to begin with—a lady's hand. Whom can it be from?" said Dr. Hardcastle, breaking the seal. "Dated 'Mount Calm.'"

"Mount Calm!" exclaimed all three of his hearers, in a breath.

"Yes, dated 'Mount Calm,' and signed 'Garnet Seabright.'"

"Garnet Seabright?" exclaimed Mrs. Garnet, in a tone of surprise and displeasure.

"My little sister Nettie," said Hugh, bending forward with interest.

"Can you read it aloud, doctor?" inquired Elsie, in a low voice.

"Yes, dear," replied Dr. Hardcastle, stooping to pick up a second letter, that had fallen out of the first, and retaining the one in his hand while he read the other, as follows:

"MOUNT CALM, March 1, 18—.

"DR. HARDCASTLE.

"DEAR SIR: Will you do me the favor of transmitting the inclosed letter to Dr. Hugh Hutton, of whose address I am entirely ignorant? Pray, pardon me for urging your prompt attention to my request, as its subject is of the utmost importance to Dr. Hutton, and requires his instant action.

"Very respectfully,

"GARNET SEABRIGHT."

"Here, Hugh, after all, the matter concerned only you. Here is your letter," said Dr. Hardcastle, handing over the inclosed epistle to Hugh, who took it with a look of amazed interest, tore it open, and read it in silence. Suddenly he sprung up, overturning the chair, and dropping the letter, as he exclaimed vehemently:

"Your horse! Your horse, doctor! Can I have your horse to-night?"

"'A horse! A horse! my kingdom for a horse!' Why, what the deuce is the matter now? Who's killed? Who's wounded?"

"Oh, doctor, no jesting. This is serious—this is terrible. Only—quick!—can I have your horse?"

"Certainly, certainly, Hugh. But tell me, in one word, what's the matter?"

"My mother, my long-lost mother, is found, and at Mount Calm, but ill and dying, I fear. There! read Nettie's letter, while I saddle the horse. I must ride at once to the village—the mail stage starts from there at ten o'clock. I must go in it," said Hugh, hastening out.

Mrs. Garnet and Elsie gathered around Dr. Hardcastle, while he read the following letter:

"MOUNT CALM, March 1, 18—.

"DEAREST HUGH: Wherever you are, and whatever may be your engagements, drop them at once, and hasten to Mount Calm. Your long-lost mother is found—she is here with me, but very, very ill of brain fever. Hasten.

There are other things, too, dear Hugh, of which I cannot write now, but of which you will hear when you come. I write in haste and agitation, but, indeed, I am, as much as ever,

"Your affectionate sister,

"NETTIE."

"Strange! most strange!" said Mrs. Garnet.

"And most unsatisfactory," observed Elsie.

"We shall know no more, however, until Hugh writes us from Mount Calm. Here he comes! How quick he has been!" said the doctor, going to meet Hugh as he entered.

"You know, Hugh, how much I feel with you about this. Let me know now if in any way I can be of service to you."

"Oh, my friend, I know all your goodness. But do you know how much my secret heart has ever been filled with the desire of finding my mother? I could never hope to find her, but still, from my boyhood, the thought of seeing her has haunted me like the dream of an impossible good; and now she is found, but——"

Hugh's voice broke down, and he covered his face with his hands.

"Hope for the best, Hugh. You used to be hopeful. And, oh, Hugh, be sure that we feel your trouble as if it were our own. It is our own," said Elsie, laying her hand gently upon him.

"My horse is ready. I only run in to say good-by; good-by, dear friends. Good-by, Mrs. Garnet—pray that I may not be too late! Good-by, Mrs. Hardcastle—give my love to the dear children when they ask for me to-morrow. Good-by, Dr. Hardcastle, my best friend. I will write to you from Mount Calm," said Hugh, shaking and squeezing hands right and left, and then preparing to hasten out.

"Aint you going to take your great-coat?" asked the doctor, holding it up.

"Yes, yes; I had forgotten it. I haven't time to put it on. I can throw it upon the horse," exclaimed Hugh,

hurriedly throwing the garment over his arm. "Once more, good-by to all."

"If I had a second horse, or had time to borrow one, I would go with you, Hugh," said Dr. Hardcastle, attending him from the house.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HUGH AND GARNET.

When friends do meet in sorrow's hour
'Tis like a sun-glimpse through a shower,
A watery ray, an instant seen,
The darkly closing clouds between.

—*Scott.*

THE full moon was shining broadly and brightly over the snow-clad hills and plains around Mount Calm, when Hugh Hutton rode up to the front entrance of the mansion in a full gallop. He threw himself from his horse, flung the reins to a servant in attendance, ran up the marble stairs, and, without stopping to ring, pushed at once into the house.

A large hanging-lamp lighted up the hall, and its rays fell upon the form of a majestic and beautiful girl, whose presence immediately arrested the impetuous hurry of the visitor. Pausing, he bowed with deference, saying:

"Miss Seabright?"

He had always thought of her as Nettie; until he saw her he purposed to have called her Nettie; but this was not to be thought of now, in the presence of this imperial-looking girl, with whom he would no more have ventured upon familiarity than he would have dared to make free with an empress. She, too, had thought of her childhood's companion as plain Hugh, had addressed him as dear Hugh in her letter; but now, when she saw before her this stately and reserved man, she blushed to think of it. And when, with deferential suavity, he repeated his question:

"I presume—Miss Seabright?"

She answered: "Yes, Dr. Hutton;" and added, with mournful gentleness, "Under happier circumstances I should say that I am very glad to see you, sir; but now I can only tell you truly that you are very, very welcome to Mount Calm." And she offered him her hand.

"My mother? Miss Seabright! How is my mother?" he inquired, alarmed at the sorrowful manner of his young hostess.

"Come into the parlor, Dr. Hutton; there is a fire there, and you are chilled," said Garnet, sadly evading the question, and leading the way.

"My mother?" again inquired the guest, when she had conducted him into the drawing room.

"Sit down, pray, sit down; you look so weary—here, near the fire," said his hostess, drawing a chair to the hearth. He dropped into the seat—his prophetic heart already prepared for the words she was about to utter.

"Your mother, Dr. Hutton, is above all pain and grief now."

"Dead! dead!" exclaimed Hugh, dropping his head upon his open hands.

Garnet bent over the side of his chair, and laid her hand gently on his shoulder, and bowed her head until tears fell upon his hands, but said nothing.

At last: "How long since?" he asked, raising his head.

She seated herself by his side, and with her hand gently laid upon his, she replied:

"Your mother was ill but three days, Dr. Hutton. Upon the first day I wrote to you—upon the third she passed away. It is four days since, so that, you see, you could not have reached here, even by the utmost speed; and so you have nothing to blame yourself for."

"Dead! really dead! dead four days!" he exclaimed, burying his face in his hands.

"No, not dead—living in heaven! You know that—try to feel it also," she said tenderly.

He did not reply, nor did he speak again for some time, nor did she break upon the sacred silence of his grief by any ill-judged attempt at consolation.

At last he broke forth in bitter lamentation·

"Oh, that she had but lived! Oh, that my poor mother had but lived! That her son might have atoned in the last half of her life for the sorrows of her youth! Oh, that my mother had but lived!"

"Ah! do not mourn so; believe me, it is far better as it is. There are some lives so wronged, so broken, that nothing but death can set them right. Such a life was hers. There are some sorrows so deep that nothing but heaven can cure them. Such sorrows were hers. Oh! believe me, by all the loving-kindness of the Father, it is better as it is," said Garnet, kindly pressing the hand she held.

"If I could have seen her but once! Oh, Miss Seabright! I thought but little about her in my boyhood, but as I grew to man's estate the one secret, cherished hope of my heart was to find my mother—to devote my life to her. Oh, that I could have found her; oh, that I could have reached here in time to have seen her living face but once, so as to have known and remembered it."

"Again I say it is better as it is. The tender mercy of God spared you the trial. Would you have carried away in your heart the picture of a countenance transiently distorted by delirium, as the only impression of your mother's face? Oh, no! Think of her only as she has been described to you in her youthful beauty, or think of her as she is now, in her immortal beauty. She has always been shrined in your heart as a beautiful and sacred memory and hope. Let it be so still, and let the hope be immortal."

She ceased speaking, and both relapsed into silence, that lasted until the door opened and a servant entered, bringing coffee and other refreshments upon a waiter.

"Wheel the table forward here, and set the waiter upon it, and then you may go, Pompey," said Miss Seabright, in a low voice.

When they were alone together again Miss Seabright poured out a cup of coffee, and offered it to her guest. He thanked her, but declined it, and dropped his head again upon his hands, and fell into silence and despondency.

Miss Seabright put the cup of coffee down and came and sat by his side, and laid her hand upon him again, and said softly:

"I feel how you suffer, Dr. Hutton; and I can imagine that when we have lost a dear friend or dear relative, especially a parent, we should think it almost a sin to take comfort in any way, and selfishness even to refresh the wasted, wearied frame with needful food and sleep. It is so natural to feel so. Fasting and vigil are first compelled by anxiety and grief, and afterward, when all is over, and when nature has reasserted her claims, and made us feel the need of food and rest—still often the heart's fond superstition will not yield, and fasting and vigil are offered as a tribute to the memory of the lost. It is so natural—but so wrong, Dr. Hutton—the rent garments, and the torn hair, and the ashes sprinkled on the head, and the inordinate worship of grief, belong to pagan bereavement, which is 'without hope, and without God'—not to Christian sorrow, which should be calmed by resignation and cheered by faith. My friend, you are very weary and depressed—you need refreshment. Come, Hugh, lift up your head; take this coffee from my hand—Nettie's hand."

As she stooped over him, offering the cup, the ends of her soft ringlets touched his brow, and her breath fanned his cheek. He raised his head, received the refreshment, and gratefully pressed the gentle hand that gave it. When he had drained the cup and set it down, he said:

"Miss Seabright, how much I thank you for your sympathy and kindness none can know but God. Dear and gentle comforter, tell me, now, the facts of this sad discovery. When did my mother return, and under what circumstances?"

"Had you not better defer hearing the story for the present, Dr. Hutton? You look so tired. Retire early, and sleep well to-night, and to-morrow morning I will tell you everything you desire to know."

"Miss Seabright, I have not slept since I received your letter telling me of my mother's advent and illness. I shall never be able to sleep until I have heard all you

have to tell me of that mother's history and sorrows. But, Miss Seabright, I beg your pardon—you are so good, that your very goodness has made me selfish, and forgetful of the trouble I may give you. You are doubtless fatigued, and should not be longer harassed by the presence of an exacting egotist like me. If so, let me bid you good-night," said Dr. Hutton, rising.

"Oh, no; sit down; besides, I cannot let you go to-night. You are to remain with us, certainly, to-night—and as many more days and nights as your convenience will permit. Sit down; I am not the least wearied, and if, indeed, you think you will rest better after having heard the story I have to tell you, why, of course, I will willingly tell it. Yes, and upon second thought, I feel that it is better you should hear it to-night. To-night let the grave close in faith over the sad past. To-morrow you will arise with new hope for the future."

They both resumed their seats. And Miss Seabright related to him the story of the nightly light seen on Hutton's Isle; her visit there, to ascertain the cause; her guardian's unexpected arrival; the sudden apparition of Agnes; the encounter and the death of Lionel Hardcastle by the accidental discharge of the pistol. Having reached this point of her story, she went on to say:

"At the first appearance of your mother I saw by her wild look and frenzied manner that reason had fled. But instantly after the fall of Lionel Hardcastle the sudden change, the quiet manner with which she exculpated herself from the suspicion of blood-guiltiness deceived me so that I mistook for sanity that mood which was only the reaction of frenzy—or, at best, a lucid interval of madness. As soon as I had ascertained the victim to be quite dead, and had collected my thoughts for action, I determined to return to the mainland and rouse the magistrate, Judge Wylie. The unhappy woman was sitting upon the ground, with her head bowed upon her hands, and her wild hair streaming all around her, like a veil. I spoke to her, and told her my purpose, and asked her to accompany me. She gave me no reply. I spent a long time in trying to persuade her to get up

and go with me—but I could not get a word or gesture from her. I made no more impression on her than if she had been a statue. Finally I was obliged to leave her for the purpose of procuring assistance. I went down to the beach, got into the skiff, took the paddle, and rowed swiftly to the landing at Point Pleasant. I found all the family there still up, owing to the decease of old Mrs. Wylie, who had just expired. Judge Wylie, with his usual promptitude, gave me all the help that was needful. I returned with the party to Hutton Isle, where we found the unfortunate woman in the same posture in which we had left her. I spoke to her again, and with no more success than before. Finding it impossible to make any impression upon her, I requested Mr. Ulysses Roebuck, who had command of the party, to lift her up gently and convey her to the boat. He attempted to do so, but on being raised she broke into sudden frenzy. Dr. Hutton, spare me and yourself the details of this illness—it is over now. It is sufficient to say that she was brought hither, that she had the best medical attendance and the best nursing that could be procured. She recovered her reason about an hour before her death, and asked to see a clergyman. Mr. Wilson, the Methodist preacher, attended her. Of the circumstances of her forcible abduction, and the misfortunes that ensued to her, she refused to make any revelations, saying that the dying should not drop a fire-brand into the circle they were leaving. When told that she had a son, she blessed you, and left this message for you, that 'Forgiveness is the only remedy for some wrongs'; and of herself she said that 'Death was the only rectifier of some lives.' She died at set of sun—calmly and hopefully. At some future day I will show you where they have laid her. As for the unhappy man who met his death so suddenly—the coroner's jury sat upon his case before his remains were permitted to be removed from the Isle. The body was then conveyed to Hemlock Hollow for burial. Old Mr. Hardcastle has not been able to leave his bed since the shock of his son's sudden death threw him upon it. It is supposed that he cannot recover." This Miss Sea-

bright added with the purpose of partially diverting the mind of her guest from dwelling too intently upon the circumstances of his mother's death.

At the close of her recital Dr. Hutton remained silent for a few minutes, and then, taking and pressing her hand, he thanked her, with much emotion, for the care she had bestowed upon his mother.

Miss Seabright rang for night-lamps, and when they were brought directed the servant to attend Dr. Hutton's leisure, and when he felt inclined to retire to show him to his chamber. Then bidding her guest good-night, she left the room.

The next morning Dr. Hutton came down very early and found Miss Seabright already in the drawing room. She advanced to meet him, holding out her hand. After the usual courteous inquiries about health, etc., Dr. Hutton said:

"Miss Seabright, I scarcely know how to pardon myself for my forgetfulness of an aged and worthy relative last evening; but pray tell me now, how is my old aunt?"

"Miss Joe! oh, very well, indeed. The only mark of infirmity I can perceive in her is her wish to go to bed earlier now than heretofore. She had retired before you arrived last night, and I would not have her disturbed. She is in the breakfast room superintending breakfast. She knows that you are here, but does not know that you have risen. Shall I send for her?"

"If you please, Miss Seabright. I have not seen my aunt for two years. I have generally made it a point to come and see her every year or two since I first left her, and should have visited her this spring even, had not your letter summoned me now. Ah! here she comes."

Miss Joe came in smiling and weeping, and drying her eyes, and wiping her spectacles with her check apron, and as soon as she saw her nephew she ran to him and fell in his arms, laughing and crying and talking all at once, and not regaining self-possession until she became alarmed for the propriety of her cap and kerchief, when she extricated herself, smoothing down her apron and exclaiming:

"There, Hugh! There, Neffy! You're not a baby now; don't tumble my cap and my handkerchief—there's no sense in it;" though, dear old soul, the fault lay all the while in her own fondling—not Hugh's. "There, come to breakfast now. It is all on the table waiting, and will get cold."

Dr. Hutton offered his arm to Miss Seabright, and they went in to breakfast.

After the meal was over Dr. Hutton made a motion to depart, but Miss Joe vigorously opposed his purpose, supplicating him to remain at Mount Calm for only a few days, if not longer. Miss Seabright joined her invitation to the old lady's entreaties, and Dr. Hutton finally consented to stay, and retired to his room to write letters to his friends in the West.

The few days of Dr. Hutton's projected stay at Mount Calm grew into a week, and the week was stretching into a month, and still Hugh Hutton found it daily more difficult to tear himself away from Garnet Seabright, for every time he would make an attempt to go she would say:

"Not yet, Dr. Hutton. Not just yet! Stay till to-morrow;" and she would think, "Why does he not speak? He loves me! He stays here at my bidding. He must know that I love him, too! Why does he not speak? Will he go away without an explanation? Can it be that my fortune and his own lack of wealth hinders him? There are some men so proud that they will not marry an heiress, lest it be said of them that they owe all they have to their wives. But such a thought would never enter the head of my noble Hugh! He would not elevate money on one side or the other into importance enough to divide two hearts that love. Yet there is some reason, and some good reason, why, when his eyes and tones and gestures tell me every hour that he loves and esteems me, his words never do." And then sometimes when alone she would break forth impatiently, thus: "Indeed, I won't bear this much longer! No, that I won't! I shan't have Hugh's heart and my own tormented in this way to no good purpose! I will make

him tell me what it all means! Feeling very sure he loves me he shall tell me what all this hesitation means."

Such would be her impatient resolve, but Garnet never could bring herself to lead her lover on to any explanation, until one night when Hugh for the dozenth time made known that he should leave Mount Calm the next morning. It was after supper when Miss Joe retired, and they were playing a game of backgammon together. Miss Seabright looked up from her dice and said:

"Well, Dr. Hutton, since you are going to-morrow, and I feel that we cannot justly keep you from your business any longer, I wish, before you depart, to ask your advice—I——"

"Well, Miss Seabright?"

"I—you know that my social position is a very singular one."

"It is, indeed, Miss Seabright."

"Responsible as I am for the faithful stewardship of a very large fortune——"

"It is indeed, in your case especially, a very heavy responsibility."

"Yes; and I have neither father nor brother to aid and counsel me."

"My poor counsel is at your command always, Miss Seabright."

"Thank you! It is in relation to the stewardship of Heaven's goods intrusted to me that I wish your advice. One should not live for themselves alone, you know."

"Assuredly not," said Dr. Hutton, giving her his close attention.

Miss Seabright then related at length certain very judicious and extensive schemes of benevolence, and desired his opinion upon them.

"Your plans of usefulness and beneficence would be both wise and good, reflecting honor on your head and heart, but that they lack the proper foundation of all schemes of action."

"What is that?"

"Justice."

"Justice?"

"Justice!"

"I do not understand you in the least!"

"Miss Seabright, have you ever learned how it was that you came into possession of all this estate?"

"My dear godfather gave it to me."

"Do you know why he conveyed it to you in his life rather than bequeath it to you at his death?"

"No."

"Because, had he merely bequeathed it to you, his will would have been set aside by our courts of justice in favor of his wife and child."

"Well, he did convey it to me! It is mine, at all events!" said Garnet, with a flushed cheek and brow.

"And yet he had a wife and daughter whom he beggared to enrich you. Was this right?"

"Right! Yes, it was right! He cut off a fugitive wife and a rebellious daughter! Right! Yes, it was right! He did it, and he could have done no wrong! Therefore it was right! Right! Yes, it was right! Who dares to gainsay it?" she exclaimed, with her bosom heaving and her color rising.

"Ah! Miss Seabright, it is an ungracious task indeed to unveil before you the true character and hidden motives of your benefactor, of one whom you have always looked upon with affection and respect——"

"Stop!" exclaimed Garnet breathlessly, and pressing both hands upon her bosom, as was her custom when trying to repress an eruption of anger. "Stop! If you are about to breathe a syllable reflecting upon the memory of my godfather—hold! I will not hear a breath, believe me! A word that should wound his good name would transfix my own heart."

"For your dear sake, Miss Seabright, I will respect the name of General Garnet; but for the dearer sake of justice I will plead the cause of his widow and daughter."

"Of his widow and daughter! I am not—the Lord knows it!—ungrateful, ungenerous, or cruel. I will largely dower them both."

"You will do no such thing, Miss Seabright! I trust there is too much latent nobility in your character to permit you to add such 'insult' to their 'injury.'"

"Then what is it that you wish me to do?"

"What your conscience shall, after you understand the matter, dictate to be done. He who gave you the Mount Calm estate had no just right to do so. The whole of the estate came by his wife, and should descend to her daughter. It was held by her family, the Chesters, for two hundred years."

"Well, I think two centuries quite long enough for any one family to hold any one landed estate. I think it quite time the property had passed into other hands," said Miss Seabright firmly. Then she added: "Besides, my godfather must have had a legal right to the property, else he could not have conveyed it to me."

"Miss Seabright, if you will permit me, for justice's sake, I will tell you the whole history of the transaction by which General Garnet became legally possessed of the Mount Calm estate. It is right—it is necessary that you should know it."

"Say on, sir."

Dr. Hutton began, and, softening as much as possible, for her sake, the conduct of General Garnet, related the atrocious history of his life and actions—first, how, aided by her father, he sundered the engagement existing between Alice Chester and Milton Sinclair and forcibly married the heart-broken child; their wedded life of tyranny on his side and suffrance on hers; the separation of the mother and daughter; in after years his betrothal of Elsie and Magnus; his subsequent attempt to break their engagement from mercenary motives; his furious anger at their marriage; the arts by which he gained from his wife a deed of the Mount Calm estate; his revenge in disinheriting his daughter; the taunts and cruelties by which he had nearly caused the death of his wife, and had finally driven her from him; and lastly, the legal acumen with which, for the sake of more surely impoverishing his wife and child, he had conveyed the estate, instead of bequeathing it, knowing that the will, upon account of

its crying injustice, would have been set aside by the courts in favor of the widow and daughter.

"There, Miss Seabright, that is the way in which your godfather first, and you after him, came into possession of the Mount Calm property."

Garnet Seabright had not listened patiently to this recital. Many times her large, heavily-fringed eyes blazed and darkened; her cheeks crimsoned and faded; and, though she pressed both hands to her chest, her bosom heaved and fell like the waves of the sea. Many times she interrupted him, and nothing, perhaps, but the felt law of justice enabled Dr. Hutton to persevere to the close of his ungracious and unwelcome narrative.

When he had closed by revealing the hypocrisy, treachery, and revenge of General Garnet, all the color was suddenly struck out from her face, as though she had been blasted by a stroke of lightning, so white, so still, and aghast was her aspect. Dr. Hutton hastened to her side and took her hand. At the touch she rose in trepidation, and, scarcely heeding what she said, exclaimed:

"Not now! Not one single word now! I must be alone, or die! To-morrow!—to-morrow I will hear you!" and hurried, or rather reeled, from the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE STRUGGLE OF LOVE AND AMBITION.

Her passion-tortured soul,
Like a ship dashed by fierce encountering tides,
And of her pilot spoiled, drives round and round,
The sport of wind and wave.

THE next morning she appeared at the breakfast table with a face so pale and stern as almost to awe the good Miss Joe from making an inquiry as to her health. And when at last the old lady asked her if she were not well, she replied curtly:

"An ill night's rest!" and the questioning ceased.

When she had retired to the drawing room Dr. Hutton followed her thither. He found her standing on the rug and resting her forehead against the mantelpiece. Her long ringlets, hanging low, concealed her face from his view, until she turned around and said, in a very low voice:

"Dr. Hutton, you are not going away this morning, are you?"

"No, Miss Seabright!—no, Garnet. I did not rouse a war in your soul to leave you until peace should be restored."

"I do not know why you should say there is a war," said Garnet, in a deep voice.

"I can see it. That fiery blood that has left your brow and cheeks and very lips of a gray paleness has mustered somewhere. Besides, I know you, Garnet. You were always very transparent to me. I know that in your soul the powers of good and evil are drawn out in battle array against each other."

With an adjuring gesture she left her position, and, crossing the room, threw herself into a chair. He watched her some few minutes where she sat, with her pale brow resting on one hand and the other hanging listlessly down, and then he slowly crossed the room, and, dropping upon one knee by her side, raised her hand to his bosom, and said, in a voice deep with passion:

"Miss Seabright!—Nettie, my dear sister!—my wife, if you will bless me so!—I wish—I do wish I had a kingdom to offer you to replace this Mount Calm. As it is, I have only myself, and an affection, an affection, Nettie, that—oh, I cannot tell you in a few words, a few seconds, that love which it will take all the years we live together to express, to live out!"

"Oh, Hugh!" she said, in broken accents, "if you knew where this rack screws and strains my heart-strings most. To think that one whom I always loved and honored with a passionate enthusiasm as the very first in human excellence—but no more of that! Not my lips shall breathe one word of blame, though all earth and heaven

cry shame on his memory!" said Garnet, as her dark eyes smoldered and flashed and sank again, as she breathed, in heartbroken tones: "No more of that! Oh, God, that I could say to my thoughts, as to my tongue, 'No more of that'!"

And, scarcely heeding her lover, she arose, threw back her falling hair, pressed both hands upon her bosom, and passed out of the room.

It was late in the evening before he saw her again. He went into the library after the lamps were lighted and found her sitting at one of the reading tables, with her head bowed down upon her folded hands. He went and sat by her, saying:

"Garnet, dearest, do not keep your thoughts and troubles all to yourself; let me share them. Come, come," he continued, caressing her, "this is unkind! I have had a very solitary day."

"A solitary day! I wish you joy of it! Mine has been 'peopled with the furies.' Oh, Hugh, even in my wild infancy I was such an ambitious child! Though, Heaven knows, there was nothing around me to foster ambition, unless it were the want of everything, and the study of fairy tales! Oh, Hugh! if the little wild water-witch of the isle was ambitious——"

"'The woman, gifted with beauty, talent, wealth, and largest liberty, is a hundred times more so,' you would say," said Hugh. "But, Garnet, do you know there is an ambition more noble than all others—that of moral greatness! Garnet, you have the opportunity granted to few—the opportunity of moral heroism!"

"Oh, Hugh, before I saw you I had great schemes! great schemes!"

"I know it, dear Garnet; but they did not demand the great moral force required of you to-day."

"But since you came, Hugh——" Here her voice broke down and she dropped her head upon the table for a few minutes. Then, lifting it up again, she held her veil of ringlets back, and said: "But since you came, Hugh, all schemes have given place to one. I had been living in such a golden dream, dear Hugh! Oh, listen!

You know when we were two poor children, obliged to pick our frugal meal of maninosies from the beach, and I, inspired by the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments,' would be talking my wild, childish talk about sudden riches and fairy grandmothers, you said you had a fairy in your head who could convert the sand and clay into gold-dust and precious gems."

"Yes, I remember. It was when I dreamed of being an agriculturist."

"And you promised you would make a fortune for me; confer rank, and wealth, and honor upon me?" she asked, smiling very sadly.

"Yes—yes, Nettie!" he answered solemnly. "Yes, and I hold myself bound to redeem that boyish pledge. Doubly bound now, Nettie, for I must repay you for all you lose."

"Oh, stop! Hear me out. Well—heigho! I thought if Hugh could give Garnet a fortune he might also take one from her—take one with her. Oh, Hugh! I knew I could not confer upon you rank or honor; you must make them for both of us; but I dreamed that I could give you wealth to aid in doing it. Hugh, listen! I heard you say that you would like to travel, and spend some time in London, Paris, and at some of the German cities, for the sake of perfecting your medical knowledge. I then heard you regret that necessity which urged your immediate settlement in some Western neighborhood, to commence practice. Well, Hugh, I dreamed that necessity would be obviated. I dreamed, Hugh, that we would make a bridal tour to Europe, and sojourn in all these capitals, while you pursued your studies at your ease. Now my dream is over—over!"

"God bless you for saying that, Garnet! God bless you for saying that! The dream is over!—the dream is over!—the battle is over, and your moral sense has nobly conquered; you will yield up this property?"

"Over!—the battle? The doubt over! No! no! no! no! I did not say that, either!" exclaimed Miss Seabright, her whole aspect changing. Suddenly rising, with flashing eyes and burning cheeks, and pacing the

room with rapid steps: "Over! No! man! man! Is it a flower, a ring, an orange you ask me for, that I should give it up without a struggle—as a matter of course? Give up this estate! Why, I should be insane, frantic, frenzied! Nothing short of ranting mad! Why, Hugh, is there a man, woman, or child now living on this earth who would voluntarily yield up an estate which they might keep—an estate of two millions of dollars—for—what?—a point of conscience! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Come, answer me!" she exclaimed, throwing herself into a chair with a strange, unnatural air of audacity. "Say! is there a man, woman, or child living who would do this?"

"Yes. Any child would do it. There is one man I know who would do it. There is one woman who will do it."

"Me?"

"You!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Why, Dr. Hutton, anyone, if they were wealthy, might give up a thousand—ten thousand dollars, for conscience' sake; but two millions! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Why, Dr. Hutton! I am a human being, subject to like passions and foibles with other people. I rather like wealth, handsome houses and furniture, and dress and jewels, and servants and equipages, and traveling, sight-seeing, and change of scene. And if there were nothing to be given up but these, how great would be the sacrifice. But then, I have magnificent plans of extensive philanthropy; glorious prospects of social distinction. And to renounce these! How tremendous the renunciation!"

"Ah, Nettie! with your usual perfect openness you have revealed the very death-throes of your expiring selfishness. For your selfishness—will die! Conscience will conquer it. The cup of earthly prosperity is brimful, and at your lips, but you will put it, untasted, away. I know you will! I have perfect faith in you!"

"Hugh, you kill me! You madden me! Have you no pity? I believe you think you will make me do it!" she exclaimed, starting up and pacing the floor rapidly. "I

do believe you fancy that you will make me give up this estate by asserting confidently that I will do it."

"I think your true nobility of soul will constrain you to it."

Suddenly she stopped, threw both hands to her breast, and turned so ghastly pale that Dr. Hutton sprang to her side, exclaiming:

"Garnet, you are ill! Is it possible that this struggle produces such an effect upon you?"

She dropped her hands from her bosom, her color returned, and, smiling strangely, she said:

"Why, Hugh, do you fancy that I am such a spoiled child as to grow ill because I want to have my own way in all things? No! But as I hurried up and down the room in such a heat I was arrested suddenly by a quick, sharp pang; a deathly pang, that caught away my breath. It seemed to me as if another movement would have been fatal; it seemed as if in the very flow of my high tide of life and audacity the skeleton fingers of death had closed around my heart and squeezed it. It is gone now. Nay, now, nonsense, Hugh! Do not look at me with such a death-warrant in your eyes. If you look at your patients that way you will frighten them to death!" she said, laughing.

"Garnet, sit down. There—give me your wrist. Did you ever experience this symptom before?"

"Symptom! Bless you, Dr. Hutton, it is not a symptom. Dr. Hutton, if you are out of practice and wish to get your hand in again, I refer you to all the hypochondriacal old men and women on the plantation, who will delight your professional heart with 'symptoms' for any length of time."

"Garnet, you have been too much agitated to-day, for one of your excitable temperament. Go to rest."

"I will. I feel, for the first time in my life, a little exhausted," she replied, rising and extending her hand.

He drew her unresisting to his bosom, pressed a kiss upon her brow, and led her to the door.

He did not see her again until the next day at dinner, when she appeared in full dress, and looking grandly

beautiful, joyous, and decided. He congratulated her. She smiled exultingly, and said:

"I feel well, very well, because I have come to a decision."

When dinner was over she challenged him for a walk on the terrace around the roof of the house. When they had reached this elevated site she advanced to the front of the balustrade, and, stretching one hand out toward the magnificent prospect, she said:

"Look, Hugh! Saw you ever a fairer scene?"

"It is indeed a sublime and beautiful prospect."

"And has it no more interest than that? Listen, Hugh! All these waving forests and rolling hills and plains; all these fields and barns and granaries; all these orchards, vineyards, and gardens; these terraces, with their statues, fountains, and conservatories; this mansion house, with its stately chambers, halls, and saloons —is ours—is our beautiful, our superb home, if you will take it—when you take me," she said, turning to him.

"Nettie, when Satan wished to tempt Christ he took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof, and said: 'All these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"

"Upon my soul, I thank you for the parallel you have chosen to run between me and Satan!" exclaimed Miss Seabright, with a burning cheek.

"You misconstrue me, dearest Garnet. You do not tempt me. I am not tempted. It is the Christ in you—the angel in you—the good in you that is tempted by Ambition."

"Hugh! Hugh! It is not for myself now so much as for you that I am ambitious. With the power this fortune would give, when joined to your talents, you could become so distinguished."

"Again, Garnet: When Satan tempted Christ it was not through any puerile idea, but through the grandest passion of the human soul—the passion by which the great archangel fell—Ambition. But, I tell you, Garnet, that if ambition be the most glorious of human passions,

remorse is the most terrible. And, too often one follows the other as surely as night follows day."

She did not reply, and both remained silent for a few minutes, when, taking her hand, he said impressively:

"Do not think me ungrateful, dearest Garnet. Very deeply do I feel the blessing of your sweet love; very highly do I estimate the honor of your ambition for me. But listen, dearest. In erecting your edifice of earthly happiness, it would be well to lay the basement sure. You might possess and inhabit a princely palace, luxuriously furnished, yet you would not glory in its splendor, or even enjoy a moment's repose under its roof, if you knew its foundation to be insecure; that at any instant in the midst of enjoyment it might suddenly fall and crush you under its magnificent ruins. Garnet, such an insecure dwelling-place, such a transient phantasmagoria, is any plan of earthly happiness not based upon the principles of justice. Such, Garnet, is your edifice of enjoyment; for you will feel that death, which hangs over us all at all times, may at any moment summon you from its possession to place you at the bar of Eternal Justice, to answer for the sin of your soul. And your ill-gotten splendors here will be your condemnation hereafter. Oh, believe me, dear Garnet, to say nothing of the sublime beauty of faith displayed in the sacrifice of earthly interests to heavenly prospects—of temporal pleasures to eternal joys—there is great good sense in seeking 'first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness'; for, look you; I may gain wealth and renown, but if my fortune is ill-gotten I cannot fully enjoy it, for knowing that at any time my soul may be snatched from its possessions to the bar of God, and, stained with falsehood and injustice as it is, be hurled thence to perdition. But, on the other hand, if my fortune is founded upon righteousness, and built up with the blessing of God, then I may be as rich and as great as I please, and yet enjoy this world with a surer joy for knowing that it leads to a better and an eternal one. Life, dear Garnet, is a journey to the Judgment Seat. In all your plans, therefore, of life's journey, look to its end. If you set

out upon a road that you knew was leading you to misery—no matter how fine the carriage in which you traveled, how soft the cushions on which you sat, how beautiful the country through which you passed—you could not enjoy it; for every mile that should draw you nearer to its close would increase your uneasiness, for you would know its end to be misery. Such a journey, dear Garnet, will be your life if you set out upon it with ill-gotten riches. Now, look on the other side of the question. If you should start upon a journey that you know will bring you finally to a haven of rest and honor—no matter how common your vehicle, how rough your road, how ordinary the landscape, how full of unpleasant accidents—you will endure it, and at every stage with more cheerfulness, for knowing that it brings you nearer to its end, and that its end is repose and happiness. And, if your journey should be pleasant, its very pleasures will be enhanced by the knowledge that its goal is rest, honor, and joy. Such a journey will our lives be, dearest love. You will resign this estate. We will marry, and, feeling the smile and blessing of God upon us, we will go forth strongly and hopefully and labor for our living. We shall have some early struggles, but God will be with us. He will bless our sacrifice, and we shall finally prosper. And while weeks are slipping into months, and months gliding into years, we shall really enjoy the very making of a fortune, taste prosperity piecemeal, and get the good of every morsel. Every little comfort that we may be able to add to our daily domestic life will be relished the more that we have felt the want of it, and blessed the more that it has come to us from God. And for our future years I hope highly, but may not prophesy. They are in the hands of God," he said, raising his hat with profound reverence. Then, his tone changing to one of deep tenderness, he stretched forth his arms, and said: "Come, Nettie! Come, my darling wife. You will give up all this ill-starred wealth, and trust in God to restore you a hundredfold."

Pale and drooping with excess of feeling she sank upon his bosom, murmuring:

"Oh, God bless you, Hugh! Large and full heart, God bless you! Where could I find my life but in you? But, oh, dear Hugh, do not be a martyr at this rational age of the world! Take my fortune with me."

"Never, Nettie! Never, so strengthen me Heaven! When I take you I will take no sin with you."

She started, burst from his embrace, and broke forth with passionate vehemence:

"Silence! I will not hear you. I will never give up my privileges. I will not be a fanatic to please you. Oh! look at me, Hugh; and do not think I speak from vanity, but from a war of conflicting passions, that rends my soul in twain. Do I look like one to be condemned to poverty, and privation, and domestic toil, and drudgery? I will speak out, though in your eyes I convict myself of vanity and presumption. You never called me beautiful in words, but you have said so with your eyes a thousand times. Oh, Hugh, I valued my beauty as I did my wealth, for your sake. But should I be beautiful in poverty? You know that I know what poverty is! Look at my hair, Hugh. Yesterday you took the whole mass up in your hand and looked at it as at a treasure, so proudly; then you singled out a ringlet and examined it as a strange beauty, so curiously. Now look at the ringlets again. Do you think it requires no care to keep them so soft and glossy, and in such full curl? Why, a rose-bush will not bloom in full glory unless it is cared for and tended; neither will my beauty. Hugh, I do not know why I may not venture to speak before you what I dare to think before God. I know that my soul's habitation is beautiful; and it seems to me fit that it should be so, and that its beauty should be enhanced by rich drapery, and preserved from all uses. How could that be done in bitter poverty?"

"Garnet," he answered solemnly, "the soul is greater than its temple. Would you preserve the temple sacred from all uses, yet degrade the greater deity within it? Would you preserve the delicacy of your beauty, and clothe your form in gorgeous apparel by an action that would stain your soul with foul dishonesty?"

"Don't talk to me any more. You will drive me frantic. Dishonesty! That is the low vice of ignorant and debased natures, for which they are sometimes sent to the State's prison."

"And yet which is more excusable 'in ignorant and debased natures' than in intelligent and exalted ones," said he sternly.

"Dishonesty! What have I to do with that? This estate is legally mine. To keep it is not even injustice. Why do you talk to me so?" she exclaimed, tearing at her bosom, as she wildly walked up and down the terrace, as if to pluck away the burning pain there. "Why do you torture—exasperate—madden me so?"

"It is not I, Garnet. No mere words that I could speak could disturb your bosom's peace. It is the awful conscience there that refuses to be silent," said Hugh solemnly.

She paused before him, trembling all over; clenching her chest with her spread hands, as though to clutch the passion there; her eyes burning in their intense lurid fire, in fearful contrast with the ghastly paleness of her brow and cheeks, and gasped between her white lips:

"You are an incendiary, sent here to convulse my soul with war, until Reason herself is hurled from her throne! Man! man! You know what civil war in a nation is. Do you know—can you guess what the internal conflict of a divided soul is? No, you do not. Your well-balanced mind, like a well-governed State, is always quiet. But mine! Oh, you have raised an insurrection in my soul that can never, never be suppressed! Oh, man! man! it is a grievous wrong that you have done me. I was so highly happy in my glorious hopes and prospects until you came. You have killed all my joy. But do not think," she exclaimed, with another violent outburst of passion; "do not think that you have succeeded! Do not! Never suppose that to please your fanaticism I will give up my estate—never! never!

"No, Garnet. Not to please my fanaticism, as you call it, will you do so, but in obedience to your awakened and aroused conscience will you do so."

"What! Never! What! resign all my great plans of usefulness, of benevolence, of wide philanthropy? Renounce all my glorious prospects of world honor—perhaps renown? Man! do you know what you ask of me? They are worth my soul's price. Give up my fortune! Do you know its amount? Why, my income is almost a queen's revenue. Do you know, as I do, with what power it clothes me?"

"I know the vast amount and great power of your wealth, Garnet. And I know the great good that you, with your wonderful beauty, talent, and enterprise could do with it; the great distinction you could gain by it. I know your pride, your ambition, your burning aspiration after worldly glory, and I feel the stupendous force of the temptation that is upon you."

"I tell you, my power, my plans and prospects are worth almost my soul's price!" she exclaimed vehemently.

"'Almost,' not quite. There is a surplus value and weight about the soul that will weigh down the scale, and toss the fortune up."

"Never, I tell you. Never!" she repeated passionately.

Dr. Hutton regarded her fixedly for some moments, then he asked coldly:

"And this, then, is your final decision, Miss Seabright?"

"Yes; please Heaven, it is."

"But it will not please Heaven, Miss Seabright. I only waited for your decision. I have it, and I shall leave here to-morrow. Had your conclusion been otherwise—but no more of that. And now," said he sternly, "listen to me! You will go forth into the world. Your wondrous beauty, genius, and your riches will draw around you the mighty in intellect, wealth, and position. Yet, queen of that court as you will be, you will take no joy on your throne; you will know you have usurped the seat of another. Your graces of mind and of person will be the theme of every tongue, yet you will know that they clothe a soul spotted with dishonesty. Your ex-

tensive philanthropy will be the admiration of sages and statesmen, yet their praises will reproach you with the thought that your munificence is at the expense of another. Your benevolence will be the sustaining hope and comfort of all the poor and wretched around you, yet their very blessings will curse you with the thought that you have relieved them with means falsely taken and falsely kept from a widow. You will dwell in lordly mansions, yet their magnificence will oppress you with the consciousness that they belong in justice to another. You will be arrayed in costly garments, yet you will be scarcely able to bear the glare of their splendor, for you will know they cover a woman degraded from her pristine nobility by base ambition, and stained with foul injustice. You will be adorned with priceless gems, yet the diamond tiara on your brow will burn and sear your brain like a diadem of flame; the diamond necklace on your bosom will scorch and eat into your heart like a circlet of fire."

"Hugh! Hugh! spare me! I tell you you will drive me mad!" she cried, clasping her temples.

"At last you will cap the climax of your hopes by marrying some grand magnate of the land, yet you will bear within your bosom all the while a false, a widowed, and a lonely heart, for you will know that your husband is not your true mate; for you will know—you do know, oh, Garnet!—you feel by all the instincts of your nature that it was to this—this bosom that God wedded you from the first!" he said, dropping his voice to a gentle tone, and drawing her toward him.

She dropped her face upon his shoulder, and wept and sobbed as if her heart would break. Such convulsions of sobs; such a deluge of tears! Gasping all the while:

"Oh, I do! I know it, Hugh. Then, why will you cast me from you because I happen to be burdened with a fortune? Is not that a strange, new reason for leaving the girl that you love?"

"Garnet! darling Nettie!" said Hugh tenderly; "if you were suddenly bereft of your enchanting beauty, my love would be strong enough to bear the change; for

the heart and soul that I loved most would live for me unaltered. But smirch not the fairness of your soul, Garnet, for I will not wed moral deformity."

"This is weakness! This is miserable driveling!" exclaimed Miss Seabright, starting from her resting-place upon his bosom, and dashing the tears from her flashing eyes. "I am no mendicant for your love, sir! No! nor will I purchase it at too high a price, either!" she added bitterly, throwing off his deprecating hand, and hurrying from him into the house.

Hugh looked after her in deep thought; then said to himself:

"The flow and ebb of ocean's tide is nothing to the waving forth and back of her mind in its present phase. How strong—how terrible is the death-agony of her ambition! If the contest were simply between ambition and love, ambition would triumph in a high, proud nature like hers; but justice sides with love, and together they are invincible. I would the battle were over, though."

He did not see her again during the day. She did not appear even at the supper-table.

I have no time to tell you how Garnet Seabright spent that night, how the battle in her soul was fought and won. I have only time left for results.

In the gray of the morning Hugh Hutton came downstairs, booted, great-coated, and laden with his saddle-bags, preparatory to mounting his horse to set forth on his journey. He found Garnet Seabright in the great hall, apparently waiting for him. She stood at the foot of the stairs and leaned for support against the balustrades. She was looking very haggard, as from loss of rest and anxiety; yet, through all the physical weariness there radiated the light of a calm joy. He lifted his hat and bowed, intending to pass her, when she raised her hand, and by an adjuring gesture, stayed him, murmuring very low:

"Dr. Hutton, was it really your intention to leave me this morning?"

"It was, Miss Seabright," he replied, in a deep, constrained voice.

"'It was,' and is it?" she added, in a low tone, gently moving from her position.

"It was, and is, Miss Seabright, unless you give me the only good reason for staying."

She advanced toward him, slowly, slowly, with averted face and deeply blushing cheek, laid both her hands in both of his, and murmured almost timidly:

"Stay, then, Dr. Hutton; I give up the estate."

Hugh Hutton dropped his saddle-bags, drew her to his bosom and pressed her there, but spoke no word as yet.

"Yes, take me, Dr. Hutton! I am not worth much, bereft of all my glory, shorn," she smiled faintly; "quite shorn of all my beams; but such as I am, you may have me, Dr. Hutton," she murmured, dropping her head on his shoulder. Then, as he strained her to his bosom, the passion-fraught heart of the man found expression for its fullness of emotion in one "great heart-word":

"My wife!"

"Yes, your wife," she whispered, very softly, hiding her glowing face on his bosom. "Your wife! no more nor less than simply that cheerful toiler by your side. I thought to have conferred wealth on you! It was a proud, presuming thought—it is past now."

"My wife! my wife! you have! you do——" ejaculated Hugh Hutton, with his full heart gushing in every tone, until it choked his utterance, and he stopped.

Through all their painful struggle he had not broken down until now; and now—but she was talking again, murmuring in her sweet, deep tones again, and he bent to listen, to hear her whispe :

"Oh, Hugh! such a night as I have passed; such resistance of the demon, before he would flee from me. But the war is over now—quite over! The estate, the projects are all resigned, and not regretted—for, oh, Hugh! where could I find such richness and fullness of life and joy as——" Her low voice died away with her breath along his cheek and chestnut hair. But it was Garnet's nature or her present mood to pour forth the fullness of her heart in words. She spoke again: "Oh,

Hugh, I am so glad, so comforted and strengthened, so proud of you, that you did not yield one jot or tittle of the right, even for my love. Oh, Hugh! oh, Hugh! my guide and guard! be always good, and great, and strong, that I may have full life and joy in loving you. And when you have drawn your Nettie up to your own high moral level, soar you higher still, that, though rising herself, she may see you ever above her, and honor you as now! as now!"

"Oh, God, have I deserved this!" exclaimed Hugh Hutton, raising his eyes in grateful adoration an instant, and then bending them with unutterable love on Garnet, as he ejaculated in earnest, fervent, broken language: "Nettie! Nettie! not Heaven, not Heaven could give me a higher incentive to high resolve than He has given me in your faith—in your faith!"

He pressed his lips to hers, and from that first burning kiss the tide of eloquence found way. He snatched her up in his arms, hurried into the parlor, set her in a chair, sank down by her side, and, folding his arms adoringly around her form, poured forth, in words of fire, the long-pent, great passion of his heart.

CHAPTER XL.

ELSIE'S FORTUNES.

You shall be blessed as once you were with friends, and home,
and all
That in the exulting joy of love your own you fondly call;
Beloved and loving faces that you've known so long as well;
The dear familiar places where your childish footsteps fell.

It was Saturday night, and Dr. Hardcastle had not yet returned home to supper. The family, except Elsie, had all retired to bed. Elsie had had a very fatiguing day, as most industrious housekeepers must have in bringing the week's work to a conclusion. Elsie's work, however, was not yet fully completed, though the family

clock was on the stroke of nine, for having gotten through with all the heavy household labor, cleared up the supper-table, put the children to bed, and persuaded her mother to retire to rest, she set the coffee pot and a covered plate and dish to keep hot for Magnus, replenished the fire, drew a little table up before it, and sat down with a large basket of stockings to darn—a couple of dozen of little hose and half a dozen pair of large ones —all to be looked over, and half to be mended. And Elsie, with her usually happy alchemy of turning everything into a subject of congratulation, said to herself that it was very fortunate she had so many stockings to darn, as it made the time pass so much quicker while waiting for Magnus. Yet Elsie was very weary; very well prepared to appreciate the blessings of the Sabbath that makes cessation from work a positive duty. Yes, she was very weary, though the only signs of fatigue she showed were in the deeper flush of her cheek, the brighter light of her eyes, and the clammy moisture of her fair forehead that half uncurled the golden ringlets. The last little stocking was drawn upon her hand, and the bright needle swiftly gliding in and out among the meshes of the last rent, when the quick gallop of a horse into the yard apprised her that her husband had come, and in an instant more the door was thrown open and Dr. Hardcastle entered. Elsie was about to rise and receive him, when something strange and novel in his air and manner arrested her attention, as he said:

"No, do not stir! Sit still, dear Elsie! I want to look at you just as you are a moment." He threw off his great-coat, drew a chair to her side, seated himself by her, and gazed at her for the space of half a minute. Then he took her hand into his palm, pressed it, and, opening his hand, watched the rosy tide ebb and flow through her still beautiful fingers. "Elsie," said he, "how long have we been married, dear wife?"

"Eleven years and more," replied she, looking up inquiringly.

"Do you remember, dear, Judge Wylie's ball given in honor of your return from school? Do you remember

that we had just heard of my changed prospects, and that we knew if we should marry we would have to go forth to a life of toil and self-denial—and do you remember that I took this hand into mine with fear and trembling for its destiny as it lay in my broad, brown palm, a tiny snow-white thing, sparkling with diamonds like icicles on snow, a fairy hand—an ideal hand?"

"Yes, I remember you talked a great deal of poetry about my hand, dear Magnus—and I remember that seeing you loved its beauty so much, I made a rash promise to keep it always beautiful for your sake. I could not do it, dear Magnus. It is not so fair and elegant now as it was then," said Elsie, smiling, and holding it up.

"But, oh! how much dearer! how much more beloved! Then it was an ideal hand—now it is a human hand, a mother's hand," he said, taking it again and pressing it to his lips and bosom, and gazing fondly on her. Then, after a little, he spoke again, saying: "Elsie, dearest, there was another promise which you made, but in my name, and which I tacitly indorsed, yet have failed to perform."

"Well, dear Magnus?"

"Do you remember the dress you wore upon the memorable occasion of that ball? I do perfectly. I do not know the material of which it was made, but it floated around you as you moved—a soft and radiant mist. And when I spoke of it, bemoaning the fate that would change it for a plain garb such as befitted a poor young doctor's wife—you smiled hopefully, and promised that in ten years, when I should have 'achieved greatness,' you would wear a much richer dress, which should still befit my station—and I indorsed the promise; yet ten years have passed, and I have failed to redeem it. My Elsie still wears coarse clothing, and works from morning till night."

"Your Elsie is happy, dearest Magnus. And the Princess Charlotte herself, the idol lady of all England, could not say any more. Young people, especially where youth is brightened by such sanguine blood as mine, have too many extravagant hopes—make too many rash

promises; I say again, your Elsie is happy, dear Magnus, and if she had the world she could not say more."

He gazed on her in fond admiration for a little while, and then said:

"Elsie, dearest, there is one thing at least in which we did not promise or expect too much—in which we have not failed to keep our promise—to love each other more and more every year we should live."

She raised her eyes to his, and he read her answer in their loving glance.

"Well, Elsie," he said, at last, "you are happy; yet it is not now the hope of better days to come that makes you happy—for more than ten years have passed, and I have not laid by a thousand dollars. So you can scarcely expect now that I shall ever make a fortune by my profession."

"Well, we make a comfortable living, and shall continue to do so; and as for our dear children, we must educate them to work, as we have done. Let me give you your supper now, Magnus."

"No—not just yet," he said, smiling on her hand and pressing it.

"Well, then, let go my hand a minute, till I finish darning little Elsie's stocking."

"No! no more work to-night, Elsie," he said firmly.

"Oh! just let me finish this last stocking; it completes the whole job."

"No! no more work to-night! No more work ever more for you. The long, long trial you have borne so patiently, so nobly, is over. Elsie! dearest Elsie! fortune has come to us at last."

Elsie stared at her husband with a look so blank that you could not have told whether she had heard good or bad news—an instant, and then a sudden joy broke over her countenance, and she exclaimed, in a voice of wonder and gladness:

"Fortune! You tell me so, Magnus, and it must be true."

"Yes, fortune—yet it has come to us through such solemn not to say tragic, circumstances that our pros-

perity must be received with a chastened spirit. Listen, dearest Elsie—this evening, as I returned home, I called at the post office and found a letter from Reynolds, who used to do all my Uncle Hardcastle's law business. By his letter I learned that about five weeks since my unhappy cousin, Lionel, who had just returned from making the tour of Europe with his ward, was instantly killed on Hutton's Island by the accidental discharge of a pistol. My uncle never recovered from the shock of his death, and he sank gradually until about five days since, when he died, leaving me sole heir to all his property and executor of his will."

"Alas! Magnus, is it not a sad and grave thought, that no property which we do not make by our own toil ever comes to us except through the death or the misfortunes of others! Alas! Magnus, our prosperity should indeed be received with a very chastened spirit."

"Yes, sudden riches should be always received with fear and trembling; and when they come by sudden death —with awe!"

Elsie looked down thoughtfully upon her clasped hands and then, after a little while, inquired:

"Well, Magnus! what will be your first movement under these new circumstances?"

"I shall proceed at once to Hemlock Hollow to settle up affairs, and prepare the old hall for the reception of you and the children. And by the time those arrangements are completed the weather will be sufficiently settled to remove them. The only point of difficulty is in the temporary disposition of my professional business. I scarcely know what to do with my patients. I wish Hugh would return and take charge of the practice for a few weeks during my absence, or until the people could get another physician to settle among them."

"It is quite time that we had heard from Hugh. But, dear Magnus, has this sudden news quite deprived you of your appetite?" said Elsie, rising and putting away her basket of work.

"No—oh, no, dearest! Give me my supper."

Elsie's nimble hands quickly laid the cloth, and spread

the little supper. Magnus drew up his chair, and Elsie had just poured out his coffee when the quick gallop of a horse up to the house, followed by a loud knocking at the door, arrested their attention. Magnus went to answer the summons, and in another instant Hugh Hutton entered. "Why, Hugh!" exclaimed Dr. Hardcastle and his wife in one breath.

"Come in! Come in! We are so glad to see you! But where on earth did you come from? How did you come? You did not come by the stage this afternoon, for I was at the stage office myself when it came in," said Dr. Hardcastle.

"No; I missed the coach at the last station, and had to hire a horse to bring me hither. But how do you all do?" said Hugh, shaking hands with both.

"Well, very well! But you, Hugh, how is it with you?" asked Dr. Hardcastle, glancing at his black suit.

"I may reply in your own words—'Well, very well!' You got my letter?"

"Yes."

"Well, friends, it was a bitter blow to me, but I believe now it was dealt in mercy to her. You have heard from Hemlock Hollow."

"Yes—but only this evening."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"To go on there immediately and prepare for the removal of my family as soon as the weather permits. But, come, Hugh—come, here is supper. See, Elsie has already set your plate and knife and fork and poured out your coffee."

"What! have you really not supped yet?"

"I have not! Draw up."

The conversation at supper turned upon the affairs of Hemlock Hollow, Point Pleasant, Huttontown, and its neighborhood. Yet there was a studious avoidance of the subject of Mount Calm and Garnet Seabright, until the cloth was removed, and Dr. Hardcastle arose with the evident intention of showing his guest to his chamber.

Then Hugh made a sign to his host to take his seat,

and resumed his own, saying: "Well, my dear friends, you have inquired after everybody in our old neighborhood except my fair young hostess, Miss Seabright of Mount Calm; and yet one would think that she would interest you more than all."

Hugh paused for a reply, and looked at them both. Elsie's brow crimsoned, and she turned away. Dr. Hardcastle looked very grave, and remained silent.

"If you knew Miss Seabright personally you would admire her very much. She is the most superbly beautiful woman I ever saw—of the brunette order, I mean," he added, bowing and smiling toward Mrs. Hardcastle, who averted her face with a heightened color. "Yes, she is certainly the most splendidly beautiful brunette I ever saw—and with a soul, too, more beautiful than its shrine."

Still Elsie averted her head, and Dr. Hardcastle continued gravely silent.

"You do not answer me," said Hugh perseveringly.

"Hugh, my dear boy, Elsie and myself love and admire you sufficiently. Do not insist upon our loving and admiring your friend, Miss Seabright. Under all the circumstances it is quite too great a task for human nature."

"Yet," said Hugh—and his voice faltered, and the tears swam in his eyes—"yet last week I was the instrument in the hands of Providence in setting a far greater task than that to human nature, sir! And not to nature, well-disciplined human nature like yours, but to young, ardent, impetuous human nature—and I saw, through tears and groans, and writhings of the spirit, that task accomplished. What should you think of a young girl endowed with great wealth, peerless beauty, graces and accomplishments—fitted in every way to adorn the highest circles of society—a girl, besides, of high self-appreciation—of great ambition—of adventurous enterprise—whose head and heart were busy with a hundred grand and glorious plans of life—what, I ask you, should you think of such a girl, in such circumstances, giving up her wealth, her rank, her splendid plans and prospects,

her soul's most cherished expectations and desires for the sake of simple, abstract justice?"

"I should think that such a noble girl was worthy of a king's worship, or rather of a hero's love. But it is impossible! No girl would ever do this," said Dr. Hardcastle, turning and gazing at Hugh with wonder.

"Will you please to look over these documents," said Hugh, drawing a packet of papers from his great-coat pocket and laying them on the table.

"The title deeds of Mount Calm, and legally conveyed to Alice Chester Garnet by Garnet Seabright!" exclaimed Dr. Hardcastle, examining them. Then he laid the documents down, squared himself round, placed his hands upon his knees, and, staring full into the face of Hugh, said: "Hugh! what the d——, I never swore in my life! Don't make me begin now! But what the deuce does all this mean?"

"You see what it means. Miss Seabright, having come of age, and feeling that she has no just right to the Mount Calm estate, conveys it to its original owner, Mrs. Garnet!"

Elsie suddenly clasped her hands, and bent forward with flushed cheeks and open lips.

Dr. Hardcastle continued his fixed, broad stare, until Hugh exclaimed:

"God bless all our souls, Magnus Hardcastle, you are not the only noble specimen of God's workmanship on earth. There are others capable of magnanimity besides Magnus—even the young girl, Garnet Seabright!"

"Garnet! She is a diamond of the first water. Is it possible that this should be so? I can scarcely credit the testimony of my eyes and ears! That Miss Seabright, as soon as she reached her majority, should have given up her estate. Oh! it must have been a mere impulse of youthful enthusiasm. She could not have known the value of money and property—and, besides, you must have used great powers of persuasion with her."

"No—you are wrong in every point. It was not enthusiasm. All her enthusiasm was enlisted on the other side, in favor of social distinction, for which she consid-

ered wealth indispensable. Nor was she ignorant of the value of money. No, enlightened by experiences in the extremes of, first poverty and afterward wealth, this girl of twenty-one had as accurate a knowledge of the value of money and property as any miser, beggar, or banker of forty-two. Nor was it without a struggle she resigned the estate. Most terrible indeed was the battle in her soul before Justice subdued Ambition. Nor was it through my persuasion that she made this glorious sacrifice to right. No; no mere words of mine could have subdued that towering pride, governed that aspiring ambition. No; I simply set the truth before her, and then let it work its way. No; I set the truth before her, and then I might have gone to Patagonia or Bering Strait, and the result would have been the same. She would never have known an hour's peace until she had restored the property, at whatever sacrifice to her pride and ambition."

Here Elsie broke forth, exclaiming:

"Oh! what a noble girl! Oh! I love and admire her so much. I do think if I were in mother's place now I should be Quixotic enough to convey the whole estate back again to her. At least, I know I would make her take back half of it. My heart burns toward that noble girl, and I feel half ashamed that we should benefit by her magnanimity. I feel as if by her giving and our receiving so much that she is more noble than we are."

"Yes, yes! She is indeed a noble, a wonderful girl!" exclaimed Dr. Hardcastle.

"And this noble, this wonderful girl," said Hugh, with his cheeks and eyes kindling with pride and joy—"this glorious girl is going to be my wife! Congratulate me, dear friends!" he suddenly exclaimed, impulsively thrusting out a hand to each.

"Going to be your wife? I am so glad," exclaimed Elsie, pressing his left hand.

"Going to be your wife? Why, then, dear Hugh, this great sacrifice is fully as much yours as hers—since what was hers would have been yours," said Dr. Hardcastle, shaking his right hand.

"Never mind that; only wish me joy."

"We do! We do! with all our hearts," said Elsie, clasping his hand again. "But when are you going to be married, Hugh?"

"Next Thursday four weeks. Having deprived Nettie of all her wealth I must take her as soon as possible under my legal protection, unsettled as I am, and trust God with the result. Yes, next Thursday four weeks; that will give you time to prepare to come to Mount Calm, which, having been just handsomely fitted up for the reception of Miss Seabright, on her return from Europe, is in a proper condition to receive your family. Miss Seabright will remain at Mount Calm until our marriage, which will take place there. We wish you to arrive at or before our wedding day, that when we leave the mansion house we may leave you in possession."

"Hugh, we are not, of course, authorized to promise anything in the name of Mrs. Garnet, who is at this moment ignorant of Miss Seabright's magnanimity; but—I would she were here to answer for herself."

Here the clock struck twelve, and Dr. Hardcastle, lighting another candle, said:

"Friends, it is Sunday morning. Let us waive the discussion of worldly matters for to-day. Hugh, you know your chamber. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SECRET REVEALED.

And in her lineaments they trace
Some features of her father's face.
—*Byron.*

In the meantime Miss Seabright was preparing to resign her state. Few can estimate the terrible trial it was to this just but ambitious girl to abdicate her elevated social position and step down upon the common

level to labor with the common herd. You have already seen how, in the fearful struggle which had ensued—in that dread bosom tempest—all the latent selfishness which marred that noble nature was thrown up and exposed upon the crest of the tossing waves of passion. But if, in this soul-storm, her hidden evil was cast up to view, it was also cast off. And then, when the waves of her heart subsided, and the clouds on her brain dispersed, and the sun of right shone out clear and bright, illuminating her soul, and revealing her to herself—then she saw that there was something in her own nature greater than all her adventitious surroundings. Now she would not have said to Hugh what she had said before, "I am not much, shorn of my beams." No, indeed, there was consolidating in her heart a noble, steadfast self-appreciation that would no more falsify itself by factitious humility than degrade itself by unjust action. And having once made the sacrifice, and turned her back upon the splendors of her past fortune, there was no regret, no looking back, like Lot's wife; her face was set to her forward path—her strong, impetuous soul already rushing on to realize her future of loving and hopeful toil with Hugh for her companion and guide. With Hugh! How, the recurring of his very name, the tide of emotion, like the rushing of a mighty river, would roll over her, overwhelming and confusing her soul with a sort of lost, delirious joy! Within this month of sacrifice, how much stronger and more concentrated had become her love for Hugh! And if the Judge of all hearts had demanded a reason for the mighty love that was in her, she would have been constrained to answer, "It is his moral integrity that has mastered my heart. It is his moral integrity that would not waver, for love or for ambition—those two mightiest passions of the human soul. I loved him before, I loved him well enough to have given him myself and all my wealth, but when I found in him a moral rectitude that would not bend for love of me, or hope of grandeur, I was drawn up to adore him. Yes, that is why I would rather follow him barefoot over all the earth, if necessary, and serve him as the

Indian woman serves her lord, than be myself the object of worship to all the world."

Yes, there was a man to love through life and unto death; there was a man to repose upon in all weakness, to confide in in all emergencies; whom the combined power of love and ambition, beauty, wealth, and the usages of society that would have justified him, could never move from his uprightness. There was a pillar of strength to cling to in a storm. It was with as much high-born pride and joy as love that Garnet thought of her betrothed.

The month and her preparations drew near their close. She was daily expecting to hear of the arrival of the family of Dr. Hardcastle at Hemlock Hollow. Dr. Hutton, who had not yet returned, was to come with them. She was looking for them by every stage, and hourly she added some new attraction to the preparations she was making to receive them. The ancients were accustomed to adorn a sacrifice before offering it up, and the same instinct impelled Miss Seabright daily to walk through her halls and chambers, designing, with her artistic taste, new improvements and embellishments for the palace home she was about to resign.

The wedding day arrived. It was a bright and beautiful day in May. Upon the evening previous Dr. Hardcastle, with his family, had arrived at Hemlock Hollow. Therefore, there had been no time or opportunity for a meeting between them and Miss Seabright previous to the marriage day. Dr. Hutton was a guest at the Hollow, and a note from him to Miss Seabright informed her that they would all be at Mount Calm at an early hour of the morning. Owing to the rather recent deaths in the family, and the peculiarity of the circumstances, it had been arranged that the marriage ceremony should be performed quietly at eight o'clock in the morning in the saloon of Mount Calm, in the presence of few witnesses, and that immediately after the ceremony and breakfast the young couple should depart to seek their Western home, leaving Mrs. Garnet in possession of the mansion house and the estate. The only guests invited were the

Hardcastles, with Mrs. Garnet, Judge Wylie and Miss Wylie, and their old friend, the Rev. Mr. Wilson, with his wife and young sister. The marriage ceremony was to be performed after the Episcopal ritual by the recently installed pastor of the New Church.

At seven o'clock in the morning, therefore, the few privileged friends, with the exception of the Hardcastles, who had not yet arrived, were assembled in the saloon of Mount Calm, awaiting the entree of the bridal party.

At last the carriage containing the family from Hemlock Hollow drove up and paused before the main entrance of the mansion, and Dr. Hardcastle alighted, followed by Dr. Hutton, who then handed out Mrs. Garnet and Mrs. Hardcastle. They passed up the marble stairs and into the hall, where they paused until Mrs. Garnet had sent up a servant to the bride, to request the favor of being received by her before she should come down into the saloon, and obtained an answer that Miss Seabright would be pleased to see Mrs. Garnet and Mrs. Hardcastle in her own apartment.

The servant who brought back the message bowed and offered to show the ladies up. Mrs. Garnet and her daughter followed him up the broad staircase into the upper hall, and through a door into an elegant front dressing room, which Alice recognized with a smile as having been her own bed-chamber.

The room, when they entered, was vacant of other occupants, but they had scarcely seated themselves at the front windows when the opposite folding doors opened and Miss Seabright appeared before them.

A novice, when she is about to renounce forever the pomps and vanities of the world and take the black veil of the nun, arrays herself for the last time in costly apparel. So Miss Seabright, when about to resign forever all pretensions to splendor, arrayed her glorious form with almost regal magnificence. Her bridal costume was a rich Mechlin lace over white and silver brocaded satin, and festooned with bouquets of pearls and diamonds, a fine and ample lace veil confined above her lurid ringlets by a wreath of the same priceless gems.

Mrs. Garnet raised her eyes to look upon the bride. She had never seen Miss Seabright before, and now, at the first sight of her magnificently beautiful form and face, Alice started violently: all the blood suddenly left her cheeks for an instant, and then rushed back again, crimsoning her face to the very edges of her hair—so startling, so strong, so painful was the resemblance of Miss Seabright to the late General Garnet. Yes, there was the same majesty and sweetness of mien, the same regal turn of head and neck, the same fiery, dark hair, the same smoldering and flashing eyes, the same beautiful lips, the same bewildering smile. The only difference was that in place of the latent diabolism under General Garnet's countenance all heaven shone from Miss Seabright's. Alice felt that she looked upon her late husband's face, only with its beauty idealized, elevated, made divine. The vague, half-formed suspicions concerning the paternity of Garnet Seabright that had occasionally floated through her mind now became painfully confirmed. As she gazed chills and heats alternately shook her frame, and then a strong, yearning compassion mingled with the high admiration she had hitherto felt for the noble-souled girl, and she said to herself: "I wonder if she knows it?" Then, looking at her more attentively, she exclaimed inwardly: "No, no! she does not know or suspect it! My soul upon it, she does not know or suspect it! No; there is a high self-appreciation, a grandeur in her mien and air, a majesty seated on that pure and lofty brow, unconscious of shame—unconscious of the very possibility of shame! God shield her from the knowledge! for, oh! as I look upon her noble presence now, I feel too surely that the knowledge of her shame would kill her with a stroke swift, sharp, and sure! God shield her from the knowledge! It were sacrilege to discrown that imperial brow of its diadem of unsullied honor, and brand it with shame instead. God shield the innocent from the knowledge of guilt which is infamy! God shield her! Oh, I can now forgive my dead husband for having cheated me out of this beautiful daughter, when I think he had the grace to

keep her innocent of the knowledge of her parentage and his guilt. Yet how he must have loved her! Oh, doubtless many times when his brow was overcast with gloom and sullenness, it was with the thought of this child. He never confided his sins or his troubles to me. Would he had! I could have been as much of a friend as a wife to him. Would he had had faith enough in me, when the poor little one was orphaned, to have laid her on my bosom instead of exiling her to that bleak isle! I would have brought her up as my own. Did he dream that I would have been otherwise than good to a little child? But he would not trust me. He could tyrannize over me in a thousand useless ways, yet never could venture to bring the motherless child to my arms. No; he could never tell me until that night, when drunken both with brandy and bad passions—he taunted me with the fact."

All these thoughts of Garnet's parentage passed with the rapidity of lightning through the mind of Mrs. Garnet, while Miss Seabright, with outstretched hands and radiant countenance, was advancing toward her.

"No; she must never know it! That pure, bright brow must never be smirched and darkened by the burning, blackening smite of shame! Yet shall she be another daughter to me," concluded Alice, as she arose to meet the bride. As Miss Seabright, being the taller of the two, bent to welcome Mrs. Garnet, Alice threw one arm caressingly over her shoulder, and saying:

"We must not meet as strangers, my love," kissed her cheek.

Miss Seabright looked down with proud gravity upon the gentle lady for an instant, and then said:

"I have great pleasure in welcoming you back to your native halls, Mrs. Garnet. Long may you live in the enjoyment of them!"

"The enjoyment of which I owe to you, noble girl."

"Nay, madam; the long deprivation of which you owed to me, unfortunately. The repossession of which now you owe to nobody—nothing. It is simple justice."

"But it is not justice, thou noble girl, that thou, who wast brought up in affluence——"

"Nay, madam—I have known penury, too!" interrupted Miss Seabright, with a sort of proud humility, if the phrase be admissible.

Without noticing the interruption Mrs. Garnet resumed:

"It is not justice that one educated in luxury, and in the prospect of nearly boundless wealth, should be suddenly bereft of everything and reduced to a position for which she is totally unfit."

"Oh, madam! pardon me. Had I not an example before me? Did not your own admirable daughter resign wealth and station and go forth to a life of toil and privation to preserve intact the integrity of her heart?" said Garnet Seabright, with gentle dignity, waving her hand toward Mrs. Hardcastle, who had withdrawn to a distant window during this colloquy.

"Yes, to preserve the dignity of her heart, and the love of her heart—which latter gave her strength to do as she did. Yes, and that was scarcely a trial to Elsie, who possessed a cheerful, loving, and active temperament, and was, besides, without your aspiring ambition. No, Miss Seabright—nature, even more than education, has quite unfitted you for the life of active household toil and privation, voluntarily assumed for long years by Mrs. Hardcastle. No, Miss Seabright—justice, as well as your own magnanimous conduct, has imposed this duty on me." Miss Garnet paused and, drawing from her pocket a roll of parchment, placed it in the hands of the bride.

"What is this?" asked Miss Seabright.

"It is a deed of conveyance of property to the amount of one-tenth the Mount Calm estate. Receive it, with my love, as a marriage portion."

"I cannot, madam," said Miss Seabright, returning the deed.

"Nay, take it—take it then as a mark of the high esteem—the honor I bear you!" persisted Mrs. Garnet, tendering the packet.

"No, I cannot take it, madam."

"Receive it, then, as your right, proud girl! Educa-

tion and expectation have given you a right to this Take it."

"Indeed, believe me, I cannot, madam; though from my soul I thank you," said Miss Seabright, with emotion.

Mrs. Garnet looked discouraged for an instant, and then, as her glance fell upon the bright and joyous form of Elsie, as she stood looking out from the front window upon the spring scene, her eyes lighted up, and she called to her:

"Elsie, my love, come here. You have a gift of persuasion that I, with all my good-will, never possessed."

Elsie came smiling forward.

"Miss Seabright, this is my daughter, Mrs. Hardcastle." (Ah, Heaven! if they knew they were sisters!)

As Miss Seabright bowed Mrs. Hardcastle threw her arm around her neck, and kissed her heartily, exclaiming simply:

"Oh, I wished to meet you so much! I shall be so glad to know you well!"

"I called you here, my love, to aid me in persuading Miss Seabright to suffer me to do her justice. You know——"

"Yes, I know!" said Elsie, interposing her cheerful voice. "I know all about it. See here, Miss Seabright! I never was crowned with magnanimity, sublimity, enthusiasm, or the rest of the Godlike virtues and frenzies! But I am gifted with some sound, good sense, which is ever at the service of my friends, and I offer you a sample of it now. Magnanimity is Godlike, until it is distorted into fanaticism, when it is fool-like! It was magnanimous in you to give up the whole of this estate. It would be fanatical to refuse to take the tenth of it when it is offered to you."

The aptness of this argument seemed to strike Miss Seabright, for, smiling, she replied:

"I refer you to Dr. Hutton. I underwent such a course of lessons from him upon the love of lucre, as opposed to the love of justice, that I shall not forget it soon. Ha! I am not sure that, should I go to the altar

with a deed of any portion of this estate in my pocket, he would not think I had backslidden in principles, and reject me even there!"

Here Miss Joe, who, unperceived, had entered the room and came up to them, interposed her voice, saying:

"I wish he wouldn't—I just do! I shouldn't like to see Hugh make such a fool of himself as that!" Then, patting Miss Seabright affectionately upon the shoulder, she whispered, in a knowing, confidential tone: "You take it yourself, honey. Who has got a better right to some o' General Garnet's property than you? Sure, you're his own flesh and blood! and the image of him, too! You're his own flesh and blood, honey. I know all about it. It's all in the little yellow hair trunk among the letters. You take it, honey. You're his own flesh and blood!"

"Oh! Miss Joe, your rash words have destroyed—have blasted her!" exclaimed Alice, in a voice of agony, as the old lady, having fired this magazine, hurried out of the room quite heedless, because quite unsuspicious of the impending ruin.

And ruined indeed looked Miss Seabright, with every vestige of color blasted from her marble-like face. Still as a statue of despair, she stood with her dilated eyes immovably fixed upon the receding figure of the old woman, until it had disappeared from the room.

Then tossing back her bridal veil and springing forward she grasped the hand of Mrs. Garnet, and, darting her wild gaze piercingly into the lady's gentle eyes, she asked hurriedly:

"Did I—did I hear aright? What did she say?"

"Nothing; do not mind her, Miss Seabright," replied the lady, with a flushed brow.

"What did she say?" repeated Garnet.

"Nothing! Nothing worth telling, my dear."

"Oh! I implore you, tell me what did she say?"

"My dearest girl! nothing that it is well you should hear."

"Nay, then! I adjure you to tell me! By your soul's truth, I adjure you to tell me!" she persisted wildly.

"She told you, dearest Garnet, that you were the daughter of my late husband; but——"

"Stay! am I so?" interrupted Garnet, in a voice of indescribable anguish.

"Yes—I believe so," replied Alice gently.

She dropped the hand she had grasped with such strength, and stood as if suddenly turned to stone, for an instant—and then springing forward with the wild energy of desperation, she exclaimed:

"Unsay those words—or see me die before you.

Alice suddenly threw her arms around the form of the stricken girl, and, catching her wild eyes, gazed into them deeply and tenderly as though she would have transfused all her own sweet love and resignation into that rampant soul, and said:

"Dearest child! She told you only what we knew, and still loved you. Dearest child! you are my husband's daughter, and Elsie's younger sister—and we love you."

"The child of your husband and not your child! The younger sister of your daughter, and you living!" exclaimed the wretched girl, sinking, withering, shriveling as it were before the fell blast of this burning and consuming revelation. At last she groaned forth in tones of unutterable sorrow: "Oh! oh! was it right, Heaven! was it well, Heaven! just as I had made a great sacrifice to duty, and achieved a great moral victory; was it well to strike me in my pride of place, and bring me down so low! so low!" Then with another spasmodic outbreak of energy, she exclaimed: "Unsay those words! Unsay them, or see me die before you! Take all I have—wealth, rank, prospects, hopes! all, all! but, for the love of God, unsay those words! Take all, all! but leave me my honorable name! Take all, all! but let me go an honored, if an humble bride, to my husband's home! Oh, for the pity of God!"

Again Mrs. Garnet threw her arms around the cowering form of the wretched girl, as though she would envelop, sustain, save her in this trying moment, by the might of love; and saying:

"My dearest Garnet! my love! my love! you shall go

an honorable and an honored bride to your husband's home. One whom I will take to my bosom thus—is a worthy match for any man. You should have been my own daughter, Garnet, but that I was cheated out of you; but I claim you now. You are my husband's child, and the express image of his person; therefore you should have been my child; therefore I claim you now to be my child of right! I loved your father, Garnet! I love you! Believe me! Do not cover your face, and turn it from me. Let me kiss you. Do not grieve so."

"Grieve!" exclaimed the sinking girl, in a voice of anguish; "I do not grieve, lady! I die! Grieve! Oh, look you, madam! If I had suffered the loss of friends by death, or what is worse, by treachery; if I were miserably poor, ill, and abandoned; if I were dying of disease, want, and neglect; if I were misjudged, slandered, and persecuted; if I were unjustly charged, falsely imprisoned, and innocently doomed to death; if I were suffering any other anguish of mind, or agony of body, then I might grieve—but now! now! that I know myself a living, breathing monument of guilt!" A terrible shudder shook her frame and arrested her speech—her form collapsed and sank more than before—and it was in a dying voice she resumed: "Now that I know myself infected by worse than leprosy"—she paused and looked at herself from head to foot; she stretched forth her beautiful brown arm, frosted with pearls and diamonds, and surveyed it; she gathered up the lurid ringlets of her dark hair and gazed on them; then, dropping her arms wearily, she continued—"I was not so vain as grateful for my beauty. But now! oh, God! to think that every atom of flesh, and every drop of blood, and every nerve and vein to my heart's core is pervaded, permeated with sin and reproach! sin and reproach! Oh, God! oh, God, quickly take back the soul Thou didst send into this shape of sin!"

Once more her form cowered, crushed beneath the overwhelming weight of ignominy. She tottered and must have fallen to the floor, but that Elsie sprang and aided her mother in supporting her to a sofa near.

"I declare," exclaimed Elsie, in her positive manner, "there should have been no concealment; she should have grown up with the knowledge of her parentage!"

"Oh-h-h! doubtless," murmured the nearly dying girl, "oh, doubtless they should have told me of my birth! And then my soul would have grown up familiarized with infamy, until it became as base as its proscribed dwelling-place!"

"But," said Elsie, in her calm way, "is it possible you never suspected this? Is it possible that, when you came home from school, with all your faculties alive and keen, you could have looked upon my father's portrait, and looked upon your own reflection in the glass, and not be struck by the resemblance, the identity of the two faces? Is it possible that you did not suspect?"

"Suspect this! suspect my birth! suspect my shame! Oh, woman, woman! you found me proud and joyous! how could I have suspected this? You found me living! how could I have suspected this and lived?" she exclaimed, in a voice of indiscribable grief and reproach, and then her form subsided, as it were, prostrate, among the cushions. And so it was throughout the scene; frequent convulsive outbreaks of anguish would be instantly followed by the prostration of all strength. And then she lay with her hands pressed upon her face a long time perfectly still, but for an occasional start and shudder. She lay there, with Elsie sitting by her side, until the clock struck eight—the marriage hour. Mrs. Garnet then approached, and, kneeling by her, embraced and kissed her, saying:

"My dear girl, my daughter, rouse yourself. The bitter trial of this needless revelation has shocked you nearly to death. But it will pass away, as all trials must, my love. Garnet, I, too, have had trials in my time, heart-crushing disappointments and sorrows, from which I thought I never could recover. But I have recovered, you see. My sorrows are gone, long ago; gone down the stream of the past, and I have been happy for years. So it will be with you. We all think our first sorrow is going to kill us, but it does not. We live and recover.

So you will find it. This sudden revelation has overwhelmed you, but you will get over it. We will make you forget it. You will be an honorable and honored wife. You will be loved and happy. Come, rouse yourself! Your marriage hour has struck. Your husband waits you even now; come! Give me your hand! Garnet!"

"My marriage hour has struck! My husband waits me now! Oh, madam, do you then believe me base in soul as in birth?" exclaimed the miserable girl, with bitterness.

"In the name of Heaven, what mean you?"

"Do you think that I, stripped of all other possessions, will carry my dower of shame to my husband's home?"

"In the name of mercy, what do you mean?" asked Alice, in alarm.

"Oh, merely this, that this marriage must not and shall not proceed! Oh, no! Dr. Hutton must never blush for his wife's parentage!"

Mrs. Garnet glanced at Elsie in despair. Elsie here interposed her blooming face and hopeful voice, saying:

"Miss Seabright, as I told you before, I have no grand sentiments, but I have some good sense, and it seems to me, as it takes two to make an engagement, it takes two to break it, honestly; I think, as you have plighted your troth to Hugh Hutton, you might consult him before breaking faith with him, for such a cause, at the very last moment."

"Consult him!" said the poor girl, as the blood crimsoned her ashen brow. "How can I consult him? And if I could, I know his self-immolating generosity. I know, besides, that he loves me so, he would hold me to my word; he loves me so, he would take the shame with me. Consult him! No, no! for many reasons. But without consulting him, I will break with him; since in breaking faith I shall wrong him less than in keeping it!"

"Ah, Miss Seabright, that is sophistry! And sophistry is ingenious, but it deceives no one. Duty is very simple, and it never can be mistaken. But I hear the bridegroom

and his friends approaching the door. Come, rise! let me re-arrange your hair and wreath."

Mrs. Garnet opened the door, and admitted Dr. Hardcastle and Hugh Hutton. Dr. Hardcastle went up to his wife, who drew him off to a distant window, while Hugh Hutton, seeing his bride reclining, pale and disordered, upon the sofa, hastened to her, stooped over, took her hand, and gazed anxiously upon her, inquiring:

"My dearest Garnet, what is the matter? Are you ill again?"

She turned her face, whitened and sharpened with anguish, upon him, gazed intently in his countenance, but said nothing for a full minute—then, as by a new and sudden impulse, she exclaimed:

"Hugh! I know my birth. Do you?"

Dr. Hutton dropped her hand, frowned, and compressed his lips.

Garnet's features convulsed with a spasm of anguish, and she covered her face with her hands.

When Hugh Hutton saw that he dropped upon his knees at her side, removed her hands, and kissed her pallid brow, saying:

"I know that God created you a beautiful and high-souled woman. I know that by no act of your life have you ever marred His creation. I seek to know"—he broke forth with sudden energy—"I consent to know no more."

"Hugh," she said, looking at him piteously, "an evil covered up is not an evil cured. Hugh, this marriage must not go on."

"Nettie, you are insane!"

"No, never more soberly, sadly sane than now."

"What! would you break your engagement to me—and at the last moment?"

"Yes; for a sufficient reason."

"But I will not consent to it."

"I do not ask your consent. I break it."

"Nettie!"

"Hugh! stoop down here! nearer—there. Hugh!" she said tenderly, running her pale fingers through the

dark waves of hair each side his massive forehead, and holding his head between her hands as she gazed fondly in his face—"Hugh! I know you love me. I have never doubted it one single moment. And I do love you. So much—so much, Hugh, I love you so much that, to save my own immortal soul I would not marry you."

"You dare not refuse me. I claim your plighted faith. I claim you for my wife," exclaimed Hugh Hutton passionately.

"To save you I dare refuse you. To save you I dare break my plighted faith, and take the sin upon my own soul. Hugh! dear Hugh! in one great contest I yielded to you, because high principle was on your side. But this is a different matter; I am as inexorable as Death."

"Nettie! Nettie! I am strong; but your loss would paralyze me. But oh! it cannot be. I will never, never leave you nor forsake you. If I do, may God abandon my own soul!"

Her features were convulsed again, and for a moment she concealed them with her hands; then laying her hands tenderly upon the head of her kneeling companion, she said:

"It does not matter much for me, for I think that death is upon me—but for you, Hugh—oh, it is hard, it is hard for you. It is hard for you, so good and true, so noble as you are, to be so grievously wronged by disappointment. Oh! it shakes one's faith in goodness, in Heaven. But I love you so—I love you so that I will pray God, living or dying, I will pray God to give you another love, another wife, who shall be worthy of you."

"By Heaven! I will have no other wife but you. And you will I have!" exclaimed Hugh Hutton, forgetting the presence of others, and speaking so loud as to startle Mrs. Garnet, who came forward and said:

"Oh, Hugh! my dear friend, is not this a trouble? What shall we do to persuade her?"

"Dear friend, leave me alone with her for a little while. God has deputed to me some power over His self-willed child—this noble but stubborn girl. Leave me with her."

Mrs. Garnet turned to go, but was met near the door by Miss Joe, who bustled in, and, nudging the lady's elbow, whispered to her, saying:

"I say! aint it time for them all to walk down? The parson—Parson Sinclair—has been come for half an hour, and the company downstairs is getting out o' patience. Besides, if the ceremony don't make haste and get performed, the breakfast will get spoiled—the coffee will boil all its strength away, and the batter for the rice waffles will rise so much it will turn sour. What are they all waiting for?"

"Nothing. And I do not know that there will be any marriage," replied Mrs. Garnet sternly and bitterly.

"Hugh, what is the matter?" exclaimed Miss Joe, looking around in surprise. Then, perceiving the recumbent form of Miss Seabright, with Dr. Hutton still kneeling by her, she inquired: "Dear me! What ails Garnet?"

"You have ruined her peace forever," indignantly exclaimed Mrs. Garnet, unable to forbear reproaches. "You have killed her with your uncalled-for revelations."

"Me! ruined what? killed which?" exclaimed the innocent old lady, in perplexity.

"Garnet Seabright. I say you have killed her."

"Killed her! why I haint even tetched her. I haint done a thing to her; I haint harmed a hair of her head. I haint been a-nigh her. She was well enough when I come through here with the napkins."

"Words kill! You told her the secret of her birth. You told her she was General Garnet's child, and the shock and the shame have overwhelmed, have killed her."

The old lady listened with her eyes starting out of her head, and her mouth wide open with unmeasured astonishment, and then exclaimed:

"Me! Me tell her she was General Garnet's child! Why, I didn't do no such thing! Who says I did?"

"I! I heard you with my own ears."

"Why, you didn't hear any such a thing! High! how could I tell such a lie as that, when it wa'n't the truth?"

Mrs. Garnet, in her turn, stared with such unbounded

astonishment and incredulity, that the old lady took high offense, and exclaimed:

"Well! upon my word! Next time it lightens, I shouldn't wonder if you accused me of setting the clouds afire. Come! if you don't b'lieve me, there's the young gal herself. Go ask her now. She aint dying neither, no more 'an I am. She looks gashly as a corpse, to be sure, but Lord! I've seen her look that way afore, when she'd get into her tantrums long o' her guardian or Hugh. Come! I'll go;" and the old lady waddled precipitately across the room to the sofa, exclaiming wrathfully, "Miss Seabright! Garnet Seabright, I say! Now, did ever I tell you such a falsity as that you were General Garnet's child?"

Dr. Hutton started up from his kneeling posture, and stood staring at the excited old lady. Garnet sprang up from the cushions, and gazed at her face with all her soul in her eyes.

"My goodness, child; don't stare at me so wild! You'll give me the fever 'n' ague. Answer my question."

Here Dr. and Mrs. Hardcastle were attracted to the scene of action.

"Can't you speak? Did ever I say you were General Garnet's child?"

"Did—you—not—say—so?" asked Miss Seabright, with life and death struggling in her bosom.

"No! I did not say so. How could I tell such a lie, when it wasn't the truth?"

"And—he—was—not—my—father?"

"I wish people wouldn't be slandering of your poor, dear mother! poor, little, wild thing. She was distantly connected with myself."

"But," said Elsie, interposing, "no one raised a doubt but yourself, Miss Joe, and we would like to hear you explain your words, that gave rise to all this trouble."

"Words! what words?"

"The words you whispered to Miss Seabright when you passed through the room an hour ago."

"Oh! yes. Why, I telled her she might well have a

share o' the property, seein' how she was General Garnet's granddaughter."

"General Garnet's granddaughter!" exclaimed everyone.

"Yes. Don't all talk to me at the same time, you 'fuse my head. I declare, if my heart aint as big as a batch of light dough, and my head goes round like a coffee-mill! That 'minds me of the breakfast—'deed it will get spoiled."

"But you did not tell her that she was General Garnet's granddaughter. It was something else you told her," said Elsie.

"I—don't 'fuse my mind. I don't 'member what the words were, but that's what the meaning was."

"I remember what the words were exactly," said Elsie; "she said she was 'his own flesh and blood.'"

"To be sure I did; that's just what I did say. It's all in the little yellow hair trunk—her mother's little yellow hair trunk. I never knowed anything about it until I come here to live, because I never had no chance to fool my time away ransacking of old papers afore. If you'll all stop talking to me, I'll tell you all about it, and you can read the rest. You see, General Garnet, when he was a boy about seventeen or eighteen years old, he falls in love long of a poor gal, and marries her secretly. In about a year arter this, the poor gal she died, leaving of a young infant son. Then General Garnet—he was Mr. Garnet then—he being a wild young man, and not wanting to be bothered with children, he puts this child out to nurse, and goes off and forgets all about it. But the boy, as he grew up, he knew, somehow, who his father was, and sort o' always had a hankering arter finding him. Well, he didn't meet his father till he listed in the wars, when he was no more than fourteen years of age; and he served under him the whole length of the war; and though General Garnet—he was Captain Garnet then—being a handsome, dashing, gay young officer, would not acknowledge or even notice this son, yet the boy seemed to worship the very earth his father walked on. He seemed to live but for one thing in the world—

to love and serve his handsome but onnateral father. He watched over the safety of his life and his honor. Twice he saved his father's honor at the loss of his own reputation; and that was the reason why he never got to be anything better 'an a corporal all the time he sarved in the war. I'll tell you all about it some time, or else you can read it all in the old letters in the little yellow hair trunk. Well, and at last he saved his father's life, at the expense of a dreadful wound, that, arter years of illness, caused his death. Well, this boy —though his father didn't set any store to him, and his comrades didn't vally him as they ought to 'a done—was thought a heap on by my wild little cousin. And so, when he come from the wars, wounded, and feeble, and broken-hearted, she stole away to him, and they were married. She said she could work for both, and she did work for both till he died. Well, arter the poor misfortunate young man was dead and gone, I suppose General Garnet's conscience, as had been stone dead long before, had a resurrection, or else the ghost of his murdered conscience haunted him, for he paid a visit to the young widow, and found her grieving herself to death. Well, he made a whole parcel o' splendid promises as he never fulfilled. And when the poor young thing died, leaving her little darter in his care, he jest passed her over to me as a great favor, and that was the very last I ever saw or heard of him or his promises till he quarreled long o' his own darter, and then he comed over and 'dopted Nettie. You see, God never could prevail with him to do anything, but the devil could make him do as he pleased."

"There, there, Miss Joe, that will do," interrupted Mrs. Garnet, to whom these severe reflections were deeply painful. "Never, Miss Joe, cast unnecessary reproach upon the memory of the dumb, defenseless dead."

"I won't. I am sure if the Lord pardons him, we can. I won't say any more. Only if you want to know all the particulars, you see, you can read the letters in the little yellow hair trunk. And that's the end of the story; and now I know the coffee is spoiled."

"Garnet, you have a right to blush for your parentage—but let it be a blush of enthusiasm, for never have I heard of two such disinterested souls," said Dr. Hardcastle, shaking her hand with cordial sympathy.

Hugh Hutton said nothing as yet, but stood by her, pouring all his earnest, loving soul through the gaze he fixed upon her face. And she—down her cheeks the tears had poured like rain. But now that copious and refreshing shower was over and the sun of gladness shone out again, Garnet smiled brightly, while yet the tears sparkled like rain-drops on her ringlets. Mrs. Hardcastle, with her cheerful blooming expression, was standing behind her quietly rearranging the disordered wreath and veil. Mrs. Garnet went to the door of the adjoining room, and beckoned the two young ladies who were to act as bridesmaids. Dr. Hardcastle opened the hall door and admitted the groomsmen, who entered and gave their arms to the young bridesmaids. Hugh Hutton took the hand of Garnet, and, when she arose, Elsie arranged the folds of her robe, and whispered:

"Never mind if you are very pale and agitated, dear; it is not so unbefitting a bride—besides, your veil is down, you know."

The bridal party moved onward downstairs. As Dr. Hardcastle followed with his wife, he turned to her with an arch look, and whispered:

"My dear Elsie, there is an old acquaintance of yours below stairs."

"Many of them, I suspect."

"Yes, but this one is an uninvited, unexpected, but most welcome guest."

"Whom?"

"The Honorable Ulysses Roebuck!"

"'The Honorable Ulysses Roebuck!' I remember 'Marse Useless,' as the negroes used to call him; but how on earth became he 'Honorable'?"

Dr. Hardcastle shrugged his shoulders, elevated his eyebrows with a queer smile, and answered:

"I really suppose just as more of our Honorables become so. He failed at everything useful, went to a dis-

tant part of the State, took to politics, made stump-speeches 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,' and got himself sent to Congress. After an absence of ten years he has just now revisited his native neighborhood. He reached Point Pleasant by the early boat this morning, and, finding that the family were all here, he followed them, and is here also."

"And his old ladylove, who jilted him to marry my father, and lost both, and who must be now near twenty-eight years of age—how did she receive him? I should like to have seen that meeting!"

"I saw it. When he first entered the saloon he was caught in the arms of Judge Jacky, who ran to him and rapturously embraced him, overwhelming him with welcomes. Then, when released from the old gentleman's arms, he shook hands with all his friends and acquaintances, looking uneasily around the room all the while, as if in search of someone else. At last his flying glances alighted on the distant form of Ambrosia, standing near the fireplace. He made her a formal bow, which she acknowledged by a cold courtesy!"

"After a lover's quarrel and a separation of ten years! That is a first-rate sign, Magnus; I should not wonder if he had cherished her image in his heart through all those years."

"Well, they had not even spoken when I came away."

"Better and better! I shall not be surprised if he propose for her before the day is over."

They had now reached the saloon where the bridal party were already ranging themselves before the clergyman, who was no other than our oldest friend, the Rev. Milton Sinclair.

"See!" whispered Dr. Hardcastle, pointing to where Miss Wylie sat gloomily at one end of the room, and Mr. Roebuck morosely at the other; "see! I do not believe they have spoken yet."

"I believe they'll be married in a week!" laughed Elsie.

But the clergyman had opened his book, the ceremony was about to commence, and all became silent and pro-

foundly attentive while it progressed. It was over, and friends crowded around to offer their congratulations to the newly-married pair. In the crowd Ulysses Roebuck, Mrs. Hardcastle, and Ambrosia Wylie got pressed together.

"I declare!" exclaimed Elsie, with her cheerful, ringing tones, "if here are not two of my old, old playmates!" And seizing a hand of each, she shook them heartily; then joining those two hands in hers, she said, "Let me be the mediator. Be friends, as you long to be!" and slipped away, leaving them together.

"Shall we be friends? Shall we be more to each other, Ambrosia?" said Ulysses, pressing her hand.

"Yes; if you can forgive the infidelity caused by ambition, and expiated by whole years of suffering!"

"I have waited for you ten years, Ambrosia. I should think that an answer. Come! let's go to the bay window and talk over old times!"

"Not now; the company are going in to breakfast," replied Ambrosia, taking his arm; and they followed in the wake of the foremost. Mrs. Garnet approached the clergyman, who still lingered as if lost in abstraction.

"Mr. Sinclair," she said, "it gives me great happiness to see you back here and settled in our parish. I am much pleased, also, to welcome you to our house. The company have gone in to breakfast; will you come?" Mr. Sinclair bowed in grave silence, gave the lady his arm, and they followed the others.

Breakfast was over. The traveling carriage of Mount Calm was packed and at the door to convey the newly-married couple to the stage office at Huttontown, whence they were to start for the West. The family party, consisting of Mrs. Garnet, Dr. and Mrs. Hardcastle, and the bride and groom, were grouped for a last leave-taking in the passage, when Miss Joe suddenly appeared among them, in her poke bonnet and brown shawl, with a band-box in one hand and a basket in the other, and followed by a negro man, bending under the weight of a great trunk. When the little party stared with surprise, she exclaimed:

"Well, now, you needn't look so queer, all of you, cause I couldn't help of it! I've been a-struggling and a-struggling with my feelings, and I couldn't help of it! I'm gwine long o' Hugh and Nettie. They're like my own children, 'cause I took care of them when they were little! And I'm gwine long o' them. Besides, long as they're poor, they'll want somebody to help them work. It aint much I can do now, seeing I'm nigh on to seventy years old. But, leastways, I can mend their clothes, and darn the children's stockings, and mind the baby, and so on."

There was no time for much argument now; but to all that Mrs. Garnet and the Hardcastles could say to prevail on her to remain at Mount Calm the old lady turned a deaf ear. She was set to go with Hugh and Nettie, because they were like her own children, and because they were poor.

"But they are not poor," said Mrs. Garnet; "and, oh! that reminds me—I have the deed of gift yet," continued the lady, producing the deed from her pocket, and placing it in the hands of Dr. Hutton.

"What is this, madam?" he asked, examining the parchment.

"It is merely a dower with your bride," said the lady.

"It is a deed of conveyance, Hugh, investing me with properties to the amount of one-tenth the great Mount Calm estate. Can I take it?"

"No, dearest—no, you cannot!" replied Dr. Hutton, pressing her hand; then, turning to the lady, he said: "Mrs. Garnet, we sincerely thank you. This generosity is so like yourself that we are not surprised at it, while we must gratefully decline it."

As no arguments could move Hugh Hutton from his resolution, the effort was at last abandoned.

The carriage, into which Miss Joe was packed, drew up nearer to the door. Garnet embraced her friends successively. Hugh Hutton shook hands with them in turn, and handed his bride into the carriage. The steps were put up, the door closed, and the carriage rolled away.

. . . . .

Mrs. Garnet continued to reside at Mount Calm, happy in her vocation of "Lady Bountiful" to the neighborhood—happy, that is to say, as long as the fine weather of spring, summer, and autumn last, during which, in her missions of usefulness or benevolence, she could walk, ride, or drive through the most beautiful country in the world; but, when winter came, with its wind and rain, and hail and snowstorms, its impassable roads, and its long spells of tempestuous or intensely cold weather, and its longer seasons of enforced confinement within-doors, the lonely lady of Mount Calm found the solitary grandeur of her mansion house dreary enough. The minister had been her coadjutor, and often her companion, in her labors of beneficence, during the preceding eight or ten months; and now, in the stormy winter weather, he was her willing representative and almoner among the sick, the poor, and the suffering. No fury of tempest overhead, or depth of snow, or quagmire under foot, could interrupt the weekly visits of the pastor to the lady. The solitary lady knew this; and so, even in the most frightful weather, during the darkest, dreariest, and loneliest seasons, there was one day in the week to which she could look forward with certainty of enjoyment—namely, to Wednesday, when, let the wind and the rain, the hail and the snow, do what it might to prevent him, the minister was sure to present himself at Mount Calm. Each Wednesday evening it became more painful for these two friends to part, and the parting was protracted to a later hour. One very stormy night in February, when he had lingered by her fireside later than ever before, and had at last risen to take leave, he detained her hand in his a long time in silence, and then faltered: "Alice, are we never to be more to each other than now?" The lady shook her head in mournful negation, and there was a "soul's tragedy" in the tone wherewith she answered simply: "We are old, now!" The timid proposition was not renewed then; the shyness of age, worse than the shyness of youth, silenced the lips of the minister. The proposal probably never would have been renewed. but for the intervention of the cordial-hearted

Elsie—that happy, healthful, sworn foe to all morbid scruples and needless suffering. She had been made acquainted with her mother's early history, and for years past she had watched over the delicate lady with more care and tenderness than over any of her own robust and blooming babies. Now that she was divided from her, she felt increased solicitude for the welfare of the fragile, sensitive recluse. It was toward the spring that she was awakened to a knowledge of the attachment existing between the lady and the pastor; and, after taking observation for a few days, she one day said to her mother: "Mother, why don't you marry the minister?"

"Dear Elsie, what could suggest such an absurd thing to your mind? What would the neighbors say? At our age, too!"

"Dearest mother, they may wonder a little; but, upon the whole, they will be well pleased. Besides, shall their wonder prevent you being comfortable? You need each other's society—you and the minister. You are both so lonely—you in your mansion, he in his lodgings; you need each other. Come! accept him, mother. Magnus and I will give you our blessing," laughed Elsie; and then, immediately regretting her involuntary levity, she said seriously: "Dear mother, think of this. You have reached the summit-point of life; before you lies the descent into the vale of years; your old friend stands on the same ground, with the same road before him. Give your hand to your dear old friend, and go ye down the vale together."

Elsie was successful in her efforts. Before another winter the lady and the minister were married; and thenceforward the serene and beautiful life of the pair gave a poetic fitness to the name of their homestead, "Mount Calm."

Dr. and Mrs. Hardcastle made Hemlock Hollow their place of permanent residence. They erected an elegant mansion, and improved and adorned the grounds with such artistic taste that it was considered one of the most beautiful seats in old St. Mary's.

The Honorable Ulysses and Mrs. Roebuck spent their

summers at Point Pleasant, and their winters in the metropolis, until the Honorable Ulysses grew weary of political life and careless of popularity, and lost his election, when they took up their permanent abode at the Point, with Judge Jacky Wylie.

And the families of Hemlock Hollow, Mount Calm, and Point Pleasant formed an intimate social circle, and kept up their agreeable relations after the St. Mary's fashion of family dinner-parties, social tea-drinkings, fish feasts upon the coast, fox-hunts among the gentlemen, neighborhood dances, etc.; while the gentle, but powerful influence emanating from Mount Calm spread the spirit of religion over all.

Dr. and Mrs. Hutton eventually settled in a Southern State. Miss Joe Cotter remained with them to the end of her long life. Consistent in her economy to the very last, she devoted the remaining years of her life to "laying up treasures in heaven." Dr. Hutton became one of the most celebrated physicians in the country, and amassed a large fortune. Mrs. Hutton became one of the brightest stars in the great Southern constellation of beauty, genius, and fashion. Their home is a beautiful edifice on the banks of a Southern lake, within easy distance of the city. For elegance, taste, and luxury it is scarcely excelled by the far-famed palaces of the Old World. From his present affluent ease Dr. Hutton delights to look back upon his early struggles, and he repeats now, with more emphasis than before, that, "A young American should never permit himself to depend upon the accidents of fortune for success in life; for in our prosperous country a man of good health and good habits need never fail to make an independence for himself and family, and to win the blessing of God."

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